Hold My Hand

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Summary

After the events of the series. Ryuko falls into a deep depression over the loss of Senketsu and Satsuki has her own inner battle she's struggling with. Nonon and Mako are trying their best to help, but it'll only work if Satsuki and Ryuko are willing to receive their support. Can the two sisters come together and help each other, finally become true family? Will they be able to open themselves up to the girls they love and trust them?

This will tackle serious topics like Self-harm, depression, grief, as well as sexual abuse, so if you're not comfortable with those subjects, this story is not for you.

SATSUNON and RYUMAKO. Satsuki is kinda asexual in this but not aromantic, she just needs time before she accepts the concept of a relationship. I hope y'all understand.

Written partly from personal experiences, so please be nice.

Chapter 1

It all started with a confession. Just a simple confession.

"I like you, as more than a friend. I have for years now. I understand if you don't feel that way about me, but I really wanted to tell you."

Nonon stood in front of her, offering her heart, yet Satsuki didn't even know how to process it. Nonon… *liked* her...

It wasn't that she didn't like didn't return those feelings, quite the opposite in fact. But it scared her. Was she even suited to be in a relationship after everything Ragyo had done to her? After everything *she* herself had done to the people of Honnou town?

She wasn't a saint. She had enslaved thousands of people, under her rule, completely obliterating cities to achieve her goal. Naturally, some of it was necessary to bring down Ragyo, but the fact remained she had caused everybody so much pain and suffering. Being sexually violated by her mother was only a small factor to consider in her frustrations with the conception of a relationship.

"You're a fool, Nonon." The words slipped out of her mouth without even thinking. "You should find somebody else. Somebody who can actually make you happy. I am not that person."

Nor do I have the right to be.

I am not worthy of such kindness.

Satsuki wanted to say that, yet it all remained caught in her throat. She wasn't intending to be cruel, she really *wasn't* , but when Nonon gave a weak-hearted fake smile, Satsuki felt more guilt than she could even bare. She shouldn't have called Nonon a fool or rejected her so harshly, but she didn't know how else to respond.

She didn't want to use the word damaged, but how else would you describe somebody that had used and hurt people for their own ends, becoming no better than their worst enemy in the end?

Even Nonon… I used her like a pawn… I'm disgusting...

"O-oh… Right, I don't know what I was thinking." Nonon laughed awkwardly, scratching her head, holding back the pain in her chest. "It was pretty stupid of me, huh? Hoping I could be with somebody like you of all people. Sorry."

Satsuki's eyebrows furrowed, before she looked away a bit. "No, you needn't apologize. I'm the one who should be saying sorry.... I can tell I hurt you with my rejection."

"Well, yeah, I mean... It kinda *did* hurt," Nonon hesitated before waving a hand to dismiss her concern. "but I'm not some baby or anything. I'll get over it. Anyway, let's go get some ice cream or something. I'm starving."

Satsuki gave a small smile. "Right."

It had been almost three months since Honnouji Academy had been destroyed, since all the students had been sent off to go their separate ways. Slowly everybody was finding their grounding, buildings in Osaka being repaired and families moving forward. There would still always be people that never forgave Satsuki for the damage she'd caused and she was okay with that. She didn't expect them to, because there was nothing she could say or do to change the things she had done.

The realization of that added to that guilt and self-hatred she was feeling, and that feeling increased as she recalled that she had even hurt her own sister as well. Needless to say it

didn't help in the slightest. But if that wasn't bad enough, it was definitely the nightmares that woke her up at night.

They were quite vivid, almost hauntingly so. Her mother still on top of her, fingers exploring her body like she was some *animal* . Ragyo's voice reminding her over and over again of the instinct of humanity; that people feel anxious being naked because they're meant to cover themselves.

She hated it, feeling that vulnerable. And yet the fear of being touched by people remained, growing ever so stronger by the day. She found herself covering herself with multiple layers of clothes even on hot days. She hated to admit it, but Ragyo was winning in that regard. In the past, if it was to achieve her goal, she didn't care if it meant putting her body on display. She was all too used it because of *her* . But now that that goal was fulfilled, now that Ragyo was dead, she was left with nothing but an empty hole inside of her chest and a sickening reminder she had lost something she could never get back.

She had been tainted, ruined, and violated on too many times to count, from as early as five years old. She was *dirty* . She honestly didn't think she would *ever* be ready for a relationship after all that, and just as she had to remind herself with Nonon, she didn't *deserve* to be.

When Nonon and Satsuki split up that day, the parting was a bit awkward from both ends, but in all honesty, Satsuki's mind was in such a daze after the confession she didn't remember much of any of it. She might have ran off, but she couldn't remember. It was a complete blank.

She needed to breathe, but Ragyo's hands wouldn't stop touching her, groping her, humiliating her in every sense of the word. She felt sick.

I need to get home.

After what felt like an eternity, Satsuki finally found herself in the bathroom of her mansion, throwing up what little substance she had on her stomach.

"Those who defy their instincts... will eventually... fall into ruin."

Get off of me. Get off of me! Please... Stop it.

Ragyo's words terrorized Satsuki's mind, reminding her over and over again that she hadn't even been able to stop her body from getting aroused. She had *enjoyed* it.

This irrational thought made her feel even more disgusted with herself at thinking that. In truth, she knew down deep that it wasn't the case. She hadn't asked for it, nor did she want it, and she would have resisted if she could have. It was something forced on her from an early age by Ragyo, which she didn't have a choice in, and yet… She still felt somehow to blame for it, for always giving in so easily. Like maybe she should have been stronger.

But even considering that as a case, why did she never have an issue with these panic attacks before, when Ragyo was still alive? Why did it have to be *now* that she started falling to pieces? It was like sometimes she could hardly even function, or *think* , she needed to *think* !

Subconsciously, her hand fumbled around on the nearby table to find something to grab and distract herself with, a last minute attempt to prevent herself from completely breaking.

It wasn't that was her intentions to pick up a box cutter and slice her hand wide open, but, by some simple accident, she *did* . And when the sight of the blood caught her eye, it suddenly became clear what she needed and wanted.

Her body acted on autopilot, as she dug the razor into her arm, angrily creating slash after slash. Tears welled up in her eyes and blood was now covered her arm, even staining her clothes, but she continued. She continued until there wasn't a spot left to cut. Only then did she realize what she had done.

Looking down at her forearm, she stared at the crimson, at the gashes, feeling sick once again.

What have I done...? Damn it...

She was a master of putting up a facade and pretending everything was fine, keeping herself calm under any situation, so why? Why did it come to something like *this* ?

Pathetic.

Disgusting.

Weak.

In her head Satsuki continued chanting insults at herself, feeling ashamed of her actions.

What made this even worse was that she couldn't even heal herself like Ryuko could have in this situation.

Was this… what she deserved for trampling over the wills of others? Perhaps, in a sense, this was a way of atoning for the things she did.

At least... that was the rationalization she made. In some way, that conclusion helped clear the fog in her mind.

After bandaging her arm, she changed into something else loser fitting but long enough to cover everything except the bandage on her hand. Stepping out of the bathroom, she was surprised when she heard her phone ringing.

"Hello?" Her first thought was Nonon, but when she picked up the phone, she was surprised to hear Mako on the other end.

"Satsuki-sama, is that you?"

"Yes, it's me. What is it?" Satsuki wanted to know.

"Oh, good, I thought I might have had the wrong number for a second there. So anyway, I was wanting to ask you for a favor, if that's okay. It's about Ryuko-chan."

"Of course, is something wrong?" At the mention of Ryuko, Satsuki grew somewhat worried. Was something wrong with her sister? Mako didn't exactly sound like her normal happy self at the moment.

"Well, yeah, sorta. She's been really depressed for quite some time now because of Senketsu, so we've been trying our best to help her feel better. But now she's not eating anything so we're really worried about her. I was wondering if maybe you could come over and try to talk to her or something."

At hearing that, Satsuki's heart ached for her sister. She did want to help, and hated knowing she was in that much pain, but was she *really* the person Ryuko needed right now? Mako had spent far more time with her than she herself had and knew and understood her way better than she did.

Then again, if even Mako couldn't get through to her then it must be worse than she thought. Briefly, she thought back to Ryuko and Mako's date. Ryuko hadn't seemed that upset, but there were often times she would stare off into space and looked like she was on the verge of tears, but she must have experienced a mental decline since then, finally having the time to process that Senketsu was really gone.

Of course, Satsuki knew she wasn't anybody to talk. The bandages on her arm suddenly began itching, reminding her all too well of her mental break down from just moments before.

To be honest, she understood far too well what it was like to lose somebody, because she had experienced it with the death of their father. But she had hurt Ryuko on numerous occasions, wouldn't it just make everything worse for her by seeing her? She didn't have any right to call herself her sister or family, and she highly doubted Ryuko even wanted to see her that way right now.

Yet… Satsuki couldn't change how she felt. If Ryuko was suffering, then she at wanted to at least try to help. Even if it backfired and Ryuko pushed her away, that was simply a risk she would have to take.

"I see… I'll be sure to come over this evening and see if there's anything I can do. Thank you for telling me." Satsuki said softly.

"No problem, I guess we'll see you when you get here then."

"Yes…" Satsuki suddenly found herself speaking back up. "Mako?"

"Hm?"

"Please," Satsuki said after a moment's pause. "look out for her, will you?"

"You got it." Mako responded in the determined voice everybody was used to from her, getting a small smile from Satsuki, who was glad to know Ryuko had people who cared about her.

With that they hung up and Satsuki began making plans to head to the Mankanshoku's.

...

I hope you all like this so far... I'll try to update more if this gets good reception.

Hold My Hand 2

This is my first time writing for Mako and her mom so I hope I did well enough with them.

Thank you all for your amazing comments and kudos/favs, etc. It means a lot.

As a heads up, I'm basing Ryuko in this partly off my own recent feelings when I lost my grandmother, so some of Ryuko's experiences on that are venting. And as for Satsuki, hers are as well regarding the sexual abuse and self-harm. Somehow, I found ways to relate to both of these precious sisters.

…

"Don't cry, Ryuko. The time comes when a girl outgrows her sailor uniform."

Senketsu's words echoed in Ryuko's mind like a mantra. Her senses filling with the smell and sight of flames as he burned to pieces within her grasp. It was just like the day her father died, and how his house burned down before she really had a chance to talk with him. She had been helpless to stop either one of them from dying.

"Senketsu... That damned idiot… He shouldn't have had to die… That's not what I wanted."

Down deep, she knew it wasn't rational, but the question had been haunting her ever since losing him, if she was somehow responsible. Maybe if she had been stronger or did something differently then Senketsu would still be alive.

More than anything she just wanted to see him again, hear his voice, apologize for how stupid she'd been.

The guilt for turning against him and allowing Junketsu to control her plagued her entire being. Damn Nui and Ragyo, even now it still pissed her off, it was all that bitch Ragyo's

fault. If not for her and her stupid Cocoon Sphere bullshit, then Senketsu wouldn't have had to throw his life away to save *her* pathetic ass.

And yet... the one she hated the most right now was *herself* .

I should have been stronger.

The voice in her head repeated over and over again as tears welled up in her eyes. The overwhelmingly painful reminder that she no longer had him by her side to talk to anymore hurt more than she could stand.

In all honesty, she supposed she should have long since been used to this feeling due to having been abandoned all throughout her entire childhood and yet somehow that only made the feeling even worse, if her father being killed by Nui hadn't been bad enough.

He was *just* ***there*** .

And then, just like *that*, he *wasn't. Just like* ***that****, in a split second,* her entire world was turned upside down and he was *gone*. And he was never coming back.

Why did people have to dying on her, leaving her? It hurt.

Even Ragyo, despite how much she hated her and even though she could never forgive her for the things she did... No matter how much she wanted to deny it, the cold hard truth was that Ragyo was still her *mother, the person who brought her into the world in the first place,* so seeing her kill herself right in front of her... It almost felt like a betrayal of some kind, just another stab to the gut since she was now the only being like her left in the world. Instead of facing the people she hurt and the damage she'd caused, she just took the easy way out, and it pissed her off so much.

Confusion.

Confliction.

Pain.

Hurt.

Sadness.

Countless emotions swarmed her head and consumed her heart, making it hard to think or even know what she was truly feeling.

For Ryuko, who was only 17 years old, it was still a lot to take in, to truly process. It just wasn't fair. Why did it have to be *her* family that was that this messed up? Why did it have to be *her* who was born with such a fucked up body?

All she'd ever wanted was a normal family, a normal life, and the Mankanshokus more or less gave that to her without wanting anything in return, but sometimes it still hurt knowing her true origins, remembering that she had been unwanted and discarded at birth by her mother, that her father had shipped her off to a boarding school as soon as she got old enough for it, cutting off contact with her for years; that she grew up bullied and alone basically her entire childhood, without the warmth of a loving family, which led her to eventually becoming a straight up punk in school to cope with even a fraction of the hurt and loneliness she was feeling.

She was used to being alone, so why? Why did losing Senketsu have to hurt *this bad*? Why did she have to lose one of the first people aside from Mako that she had actually been able to become close to? One of the people who loved and accepted her, fought by her side, despite everything and he was *gone*.

Damn it...!

She just wished he was still there with her, even if he *was* making dumb jabs at her BMI again, she would be totally fine with that, just as long as she could wear him again, talk to him. *Hell* , even if she *couldn't* wear him again, that was okay *too* , as long as he was with her in some form or another. That was all she wanted.

"Ryuko-chan...?"

Ryuko snapped out of her thoughts when she felt Mako's arms wrap around her sob-wracked body. She absentmindedly looked over her shoulder to see her girlfriend, who had a worried look on her face.

"Mako…" Ryuko's voice cracked and without thinking about it, she returned the embrace. Burying her head in Mako's chest, Ryuko freely let sobs wrack her body. "I really miss him. God, it hurts so bad. I just want this pain to go away…"

"I know you do. Senketsu was your friend, you two went everywhere together. It's only natural that you'd feel that way." Mako gently combed a hand through Ryuko's bed hair, giving her a small kiss on the crown of her head. "But it's all okay, Ryuko-chan. Everything's gonna be okay. You know why?"

Blue eyes met brown as if inquiring for an answer. Mako gave a gentle smile.

"It's cuz I told you before, remember? You still have us, and even Satsuki-sama too now. You're not alone anymore..." she said. "Even so, you've gotta take care of yourself... So please..., will you eat something? For me...?"

Mako already could guess the answer, but she had to try.

Ryuko was silent for a moment as she considered it, but in the end averted her gaze, her stomach not feeling up to taking in anything.

"...I'm sorry, Mako, I just... *can't* right now…" Ryuko said, her voice cracking.

"...I thought you might say that… It looks like you leave me with no choice then." Mako stood up, pointing out a finger towards Ryuko. "I'll just have to get mom to make you something so good that even *you* can't resist it! Just wait here. Mankanshoku Mako's on the job!"

"H-hey, wait, Mako-!" Ryuko started to call out. However, Mako was already gone, headed down stairs. "Geez… Why's she always like that...?"

Somehow, she couldn't stop herself from smiling softly. That was Mako for you. No matter what kind of funk Ryuko found herself in, Mako had never given up on her. Something inside of Ryuko felt undeserving of her kindness. She had hurt Mako before just as she had hurt Senketsu and yet Mako remained by her side completely undeterred. She was the most persistent person Ryuko had ever known. If not for that devotion, what could have become of her?

Even now, it was scary to think of a world without Mako, but it was even more crazy to think that Mako had asked to go out with *her* of all people, and yet it made her happier than she could ever imagine and she had no intentions of passing that up. She was so grateful that Mako had wanted her to be a part of her life like that, because she wanted the same. She had for a while, in fact, even long before Mako asked her out.

Something inside of her wished that she could repay all of her kindness somehow, but there was nothing she possibly could do to make up for everything the Mankanshoku family had given and offered her.

Somehow knowing that, and remembering how patient Mako had been with her only made everything hurt more.

...

When Satsuki arrived, she was immediately greeted by Sukuyo, who opened the door for her.

"Oh, hello, Satsuki-chan. How are you today?" Sukuyo asked, giving her the same 'chan' honorific she always gave Ryuko. She had been addressing her that way for a while now any time they spoke and it was definitely a bit odd at first, but somehow it was comforting since it made Satsuki feel more like she was part of their family.

Her views on what a mother was supposed to be like had been no doubt distorted because of Ragyo, but, if she had a choice, Sukuyo would be closer to the kind of mother she would have desired growing up. Naturally, she knew that was only wishful thinking and after the suffering she'd caused Mako's family, it was surprising that they even wanted anything to do with her.

"I'm doing well, thank you for asking." Satsuki said politely, having taken off her shoes before entering. In truth, she was anything *but* , but there was no point in saying that or worrying her. She was here for Ryuko, after all.

"Ryuko-chan is in her room right now. Would you like for me to make you some tea while you talk to her?" She offered.

"I'm not certain how much help I'll be, but, yes, I would love that." Satsuki smiled, but in truth felt a bit out of place, wondering if she even had the right to say yes. It was offered to her, so it would be rude to turn it down, right?

She awkwardly moved her bandaged hand out of sight when she caught Sukuyo's eyes on it.

"Then I'll get straight to it." Sukuyo beamed, pretending she didn't notice. "Now... go on up and be there for your sister, okay?"

"Right. I will." Satsuki acknowledged. She started to dismiss herself to go see Ryuko, but before she could she ran into Mako, who was more than happy to see her.

"Oh, Satsuki-sama, you finally made it! I was wondering when you were going to get here." Mako started to hug her, making Satsuki more uncomfortable than she wanted to admit. It wasn't that she distrusted Mako, just the association with physical contact created by Ragyo made it practically unbearable. Not to mention the fact that her arm was covered in lacerations and it was impossible not to flinch when Mako unknowingly rubbed against them.

"It's good to see you as well, Mako. But if it's no trouble, could you please let go of me?" Satsuki asked sheepishly, her voice weak.

"Oh, sorry." Mako apologized.

"No, it's fine, thank you. I should probably go and talk to her now." Satsuki told her.

"Right. You probably know already, but Ryuko-chan upstairs." Mako nodded, her facial features faltering a bit. "I'm sure she'll be happy to see you even if she doesn't say it. She needs you, Satsuki-sama. I know she does. She's just hurt and confused right now because of Senketsu dying, so if she says anything that isn't nice, just remember she doesn't mean it, okay?" Mako answered, trying her best to reassure her. Ryuko's mood had been fluctuating a lot lately. Sometimes all she could do was cry and break down in tears, and other times she was angry and would snap at those around her saying things she felt bad for and apologized over later. Mako never took any of it to heart, of course, because she knew that Ryuko was in pain. Eventually all of it would pass, Ryuko just needed time.

But as for how Ryuko would react to seeing Satsuki, she couldn't say for certain. Even with that aside, taking chances was better than doing nothing. Ryuko needed as big of a support system as she could get and Mako could tell that Satsuki deeply cared for Ryuko and vise versa despite their rough start before finding out they were sisters. She was sure bringing Satsuki into this matter was the best thing she could do for Ryuko.

Satsuki, on the other hand, *wasn't* so sure about that, but didn't say anything against it. "I see. I'll keep that in mind."

With that, she began heading upstairs to Ryuko's room, ready to face whatever risks she had to if only for the slim possibility that her existence would help Ryuko after all. After all, she was no stranger to what it was like to lose somebody important to you. She had dealt with her own fair share of heavy emotions following her father's alleged death and even if it wasn't entirely the same experience as Ryuko had, it pained her to know that her baby sister had had to go through such a thing.

…

Once again thanks for the kudos and favs, everybody. I hope y'all will continue to enjoy this. :)

This story will contain a lot of Ragyo bashing in the future, so erm if by any... chance you're a fan of her as a person rather than just as a villain, you probably shouldn't be here.

Chapter 3

A/N: THERE'S MENTIONS OF STUFF FROM THE OVA/EPISODE 25, SO IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT, I APOLOGIZE.

Satsuki took a moment of hesitation before entering Ryuko's room, not certain what her reaction to seeing her would be. However, when Ryuko saw her come in, she wasn't upset, fortunately, but she did sit straight up, a bit surprised.

"Nee-san! What are you doing here? Geez, don't tell me Mako asked you to come out here." Ryuko guessed, scoffing.

"Yes. But it was no trouble, really. I'll gladly leave if you don't want me here." Satsuki said, before approaching her. It could have just been her imagination as it was hard to tell due to the baggy shirt Ryuko was wearing, but it looked like she had lost some weight. To top it off, there were black rings under her eyes, implying lack of proper sleep. Maybe nightmares? If so, she wouldn't be surprised given everything that happened. It wasn't like she herself didn't suffer from them as well.

"No, it's fine. I just wasn't expecting you to come here is all." Ryuko muttered, crossing her legs and resting her chin in the palm of her hand.

"...Do you mind if I sit next to you?" Satsuki asked, subconsciously expecting Ryuko to turn her away in any second. In all honesty she would deserve it if she did.

"Yeah, sure, go right ahead. It's not like I can stop you..." Ryuko said sarcastically, scooting over a bit, but there wasn't any aggression behind it, so Satsuki took it as an okay, sitting on Ryuko's left side.

"I heard from Mako that you haven't been eating well?" Satsuki inquired. Ryuko quickly turned her head away.

"Yeah, and so what if I haven't? Why's everybody so upset about how much I've been eating? It's my body, I'll do whatever I want to with it." Ryuko retorted, as she looked away. Her eating habits weren't something she wanted to talk about right now at all. However, the memory of Senketsu popped into her head and she gave a solemn smile, her mood doing a complete 180. "Senketsu… he always used to nag me about my BMI too. He told me to lay back on the croquettes..."

"Is that why-" Satsuki started to ask, but Ryuko cut her off.

"No, it's *not* that if you're wondering. It's like I've said numerous times before, I'm just not that hungry, *okay* ? Why is that so hard to understand?!" Ryuko raised her voice, irritated by the endless questions. Immediately after, guilt crept up into her chest, afraid that Satsuki would leave her side. She looked down, hair shadowing her eyes. She hadn't intended to snap at her, the words just came out. "Sorry, I didn't mean to shout at you, I just…"

Satsuki paused, considering her words, but dared to press the topic in the end. Before she did, however, she let out a breath she didn't even know she was holding in. Was this feeling… fear? What was there to be afraid of? If Ryuko chose to push her away, she had already prepared for that since arriving here. And yet, she knew down deep that she *was* afraid. Afraid of losing the only family she had left; the sister she thought had died all those years ago.

As she had thought numerous times, her *little sister* that was suffering in front of her right now and needed as much support as she could get.

She couldn't leave her now, not like *this* . Because if she did, it felt like she would never be able see her again. She *had* to take initiative, even if it *was* unwanted.

"It is fine… And I'm well aware that you probably don't want to hear this from me, but you need to take care of yourself, Ryuko… I can tell they're all very worried about you, as am I..."

Who am I to say such things after what I did earlier? I have no right to lecture her on this matter seeing as I can't even properly control my own emotions anymore.

Satsuki once again cursed herself. She knew she wasn't in any place to be giving advice, but Ryuko was what was important right now.

At hearing Satsuki's genuine concern, Ryuko felt even worse for getting so grouchy with her.

"Geez, look, I'll try to eat something later if I feel like it, alright...? Mako kinda talked to me about it earlier. I already know that everybody's been worried about me… I just… I keep getting sick anytime I think about it, y'know… I really miss him..." Ryuko muttered after a brief pause, feeling tears already forming in her eyes again. Her voice cracked. Satsuki remained silent choosing to allow her to let her heart out. "It's like... no matter what I do, the pain won't go away. I can't stop seeing him burning in those god damned flames. It happens over and over again, just like with my dad… I feel so stupid for being this upset about it, but Senketsu wasn't just some piece of clothing, damn it. He..."

Memories of being in Junketsu once again haunted her. The things she said even before that.

"Get away from me. I'm done with you. I'm never putting you on again!"

"...He was my *friend* , and I treated him like garbage…!"

Uncontrollable sobs wracked her body, as she pulled in on herself.

Satsuki felt her chest constrict at hearing Ryuko say such things, and something inside of her wanted more than anything to wrap her arms around her and console her, but the thought almost immediately made her feel dirty as soon as it came.

Realistically, she knew sisters hugged all the time, there wasn't supposed to be anything wrong about it, but Ragyo had long since destroyed that *normal* prospect of a *normal* family for her. As it was, she would always subconsciously associate physical contact with 13 years of being violated and tainted in the name of "purification". She hated it and yet she wondered if this was some other form of punishment she deserved for her crimes.

Despite that, she opted to give what comfort she could with her words alone. "Ryuko, you aren't stupid. What you're feeling right now is completely normal given the circumstances… If anybody should be feeling sorry right now, it's me… I tried to use Senketsu as a weapon, and I hurt both of you as well as many others in the process, so even if you still hated me after everything I did, I wouldn't blame you for it… In all honesty, I don't even know if I have a right to be here right now."

Satsuki had to avert her gaze after that. She didn't want to unload on Ryuko, but she at least deserved to hear that much from her, if nothing else.

Ryuko's sobs came to a halt when Satsuki said those words. She looked up at her with tear filled eyes, before finding herself leaning a head on her shoulder without thinking about it. Satsuki felt herself tense up at the unexpected physical contact and brush of fabric against her bandaged arm, but in the end, she didn't push her off. Something told her Ryuko needed this.

"...I never… hated you…" Ryuko murmured weakly, her voice horse. "Not after I realized the truth. I was just hurt... and confused... After our dad was killed, I felt lost on what to do and where to go. It hurt so much. Even now, it still does and probably will for a while. But the only ones I hate are Ragyo and that bitch Nui Harime… They ruined both of our lives..."

At hearing that, Satsuki felt both relief but also disappointed for some reason. She was almost happy that Ryuko didn't hate her, and yet it wasn't what she anticipated. She didn't *deserve* to be forgiven, especially not by the baby sister whom she'd failed to protect.

"Even so…" Ryuko started in again. "I feel like it was all my fault somehow… If I had been stronger, then maybe I could have done something and Senketsu and our dad wouldn't have had to..."

Ryuko frustratingly clutched the fabric on Satsuki's sleeve, choking back yet another sob.

Satsuki's heart ached. Even though it felt wrong, as she once again remembered all the times Ragyo had touched her, she tried her best to remind herself it was just her imagination, she reached up despite her hesitance and gently placed a hand on Ryuko's head. "It's not your fault, Ryuko… You shouldn't blame yourself. There's nothing at all you could have done differently. I've often wondered the same about our father as well, wishing I had been stronger, thinking maybe I could have saved him if I had known he was still alive, but, as you've said yourself, the only one to blame here is Ragyo and Harime."

"He died to get me to safety…" Ryuko muttered.

"That is true, but he saved you because he wanted you to *live* ." Satsuki reasoned.

"Yeah, well, what's the point if he's not here with me?!" Ryuko snapped back, bringing Satsuki to silence. "I didn't... Nobody asked him to do that, damn it...! I would have rather it be me if it meant... he got to…! I..."

At this point, Ryuko didn't even know what was coming out of her mouth. All she knew was that the pain in her chest wouldn't stop. *It hurts so bad.*

Satsuki wanted to speak back up at recognizing the implication, but fortunately, she didn't need to.

"Don't say that…"

Because it was Mako that interrupted both of them. Satsuki and Ryuko looked up to see her standing in the door way.

Mako had tears in her eyes as she approached Ryuko. There was no telling how much she had heard but Ryuko immediately felt guilty for making her cry.

"Mako... I…" She started to sit up, pulling away from Satsuki. Mako pulled her into her arms to cut her off.

"Senketsu wouldn't want you to beat yourself up like this, Ryuko-chan… So please... you can't… You can't say those kinds of things…" Mako pulled back to look her in the eye and unable to stop her tears from falling. "If I lost you, I don't know what I would do. Is that why you haven't been eating? Because you want to die?"

Their noses were almost touching and Mako was desperate for an answer. Ryuko knew she had to do something. It hadn't been her intentions to get her girlfriend all upset and worried about her like that.

Reaching up, she gently cupped her cheeks.

"Hey, calm down...," She wiped away Mako's tears, briefly leaning forward to peck her on the lips. "I promise it's not like that. I'm not gonna do anything, cuz I still got you and Nee-san, and everybody else. Just like you said, remember?"

In truth, she didn't know what she had meant or even what she really wanted right now. She did feel alone but did she really want to die? That definitely wasn't it, and even if the thoughts *were* there *sometimes* , she refused to do that to Mako, or anybody else.

Besides, if she really wanted to kill herself, she certainly wouldn't have done it by starvation.

For some reason, Ragyo crushing her life fiber infused heart in her hand suddenly flashed into her head. However, thanks to Mako, the thought passed almost as quickly as it came.

"Mn-hm..." Mako murmured.

"Good, now stop crying already. You know I can't stand seeing you all worked up about me." Ryuko, teased, trying her best to offer reassurance, as she pinched Mako's cheeks.

Satsuki had turned away, feeling rather awkward by the whole situation. She was truly happy that her sister had somebody there for her, but did they really have to be so affectionate with each other in front of her?

Briefly, she found herself thinking of Nonon. Were it not for the things with Ragyo, or the things she herself had done, maybe they could be like that as well. It was a thought she'd been having quite frequently as of late, even despite her fear of intimacy, but she quickly scolded herself. It wouldn't work out, for multiple reasons. She knew that. And it was selfish of her to even consider it after rejecting her so harshly.

Suddenly her arm began to itch, guilt creeping up in her stomach. She hadn't even called her to apologize.

"Oh, that reminds me!" Mako's voice interrupted her thoughts. "Mom said she's making croquettes for dinner and she wants you to join us, Satsuki-sama! She also says you're free to stay the night since you're already here and it's getting late."

"I appreciate the offer, but I would really hate to impose." Satsuki said, feeling awkward about suddenly being put on the spotlight.

"But it's really no trouble at all! After all, you're Ryuko-chan's big sister, so you're automatically part of this family as much as Ryuko-chan is!" Mako smiled with insistence.

"Just go with it, Nee-san. There's no point in trying to detour her." Ryuko reached up and pulled Mako into a hug. "You know *Mako* , when she has her mind set on something, nothing in the world can stop her."

Satsuki gave a small chuckle at hearing that, deciding there was no point in arguing against it when she saw Mako's determined face. "Alright then. If you insist, I suppose I don't mind."

"Great! I'll go let Mom know right now! You two can come on down whenever you want, okay? Dinner should be ready pretty soon." Mako told her.

"Right. We'll do that." Satsuki said, as Ryuko looked away at the mention of dinner.

"Ryuko-chan, please say you'll try to eat something this time, even if it's only a little bit." Mako pled, hoping for some kind of different response than Ryuko had been giving her for days.

"I… Look, fine. I'll try, alright? But I won't make any promises." Ryuko fortunately gave it to her.

"That's alright. That's all I ask. Welp, I'm headed downstairs now to help her set up." Mako told them before humming a tune leaving the two sisters alone.

Ryuko's smile faltered and she looked down.

"Earlier, you asked if I was okay with you being here. How could I not be? You're the only family I have left. I consider them family too, but you know what I mean… You coming out here and talking to me… It really means a lot, so urm... thanks, I guess..." Ryuko murmured the last part barely loud enough to hear, feeling her face heat up a bit in awkwardness.

Satsuki's eyes widened ever so slightly in response, before she responded in kind. "Don't mention it. We should probably go ahead and head downstairs."

"Yeah…" Ryuko said sheepishly, as she got up to follow her big sister down into the kitchen.

A/N: I hope I didn't make things seem weird because that definitely wasn't my intentions, Satsuki has a very serious trauma to work through regarding physical contact. There's not supposed to be anything bad associated with hugging a sister, but when you're used to being violated by your own family, a mother or parent no less, it's sometimes very hard to move past that and see physical contact as anything but* that *, especially considering she dealt with that her entire childhood under Ragyo. Maybe there's even a subconscious self-induced fear of becoming like Ragyo or her actions being interpreted as such, even though Satsuki is nothing like Ragyo in heart, and would never do something like she did. I wanted to explore that with some level of realism. She needs to become a bit more comfortable with general physical contact and understand it's not always a bad thing before she could open up enough for a relationship with Nonon. Even so, she will get there eventually. I want to explore her becoming more comfortable to platonic and familial stuff first with Ryuko and then I'll move on to the romantic stuff with Nonon. Also finding a friend in Mako will help with some of that progression, I think. As for Ryuko, she's trying

to wrap her head around the fact that she has a family member still alive and getting past grief is not by any means easy at all. I know when my grandma died I was having so many different confusing thoughts, and I hopefully explored some of them properly here, but I will continue to explore it. She's at least making a little progress which is great.

Chapter 4

Once again, thank you all for the wonderful comments and kudos everybody, I'm glad at least some people are enjoying this. This chapter was a particular challenge, but I hope some people enjoy it.

Satsuki didn't know how, but she'd found herself in the middle of a rather large meal. Matoro, Barazo, and Guts were chowing down faster than anybody else. Satsuki almost felt out of place, eating food from people who she had once enslaved. She didn't deserve this.

Why were they being so nice to her after everything she had done? None of this was *right* . Once again, her arm screamed at her, begging for her to rip it to even further shreds than she already had earlier that day, and she immediately grew frustrated, her mood souring even more.

Where are these thoughts even coming from?

She had only done it *once* and already the desire to see more blood was practically consuming her. *No* , she couldn't do that again. Yet, against her wishes, the doubt remained that she would be able to stop herself again if the urge became too strong.

"What's wrong, Satsuki-chan? Are the croquettes not to your liking? I can always make something different if you really want me to." Sukuyo inquired to Satsuki, who had barely touched anything on her plate.

"No, you mussn't trouble yourself. It's not that, I assure you. Your food is even more delicious than the last time I tried it. " Satsuki smiled, before taking another bite.

"Then make sure to eat it all up, okay? Young girls like yourself need lots of nutrition to stay strong and healthy." Sukuyo said, then turned her gaze to Ryuko. "That means you too, Ryuko-chan."

"Oh, yeah, right… Sorry, Oba-san..." Ryuko looked down sheepishly after being reminded that she hadn't touched anything at all, gaining the attention of from Satsuki and Mako.

"Ryuko-chan, please, you told me you would try to eat something." Mako pled. "Mom even put extra hard work into her croquettes tonight so you *have* to try them…!"

"Yeah, I know. I just…" Ryuko murmured. Her stomach was twisting in agony at the thought of eating anything at all.

"Ryuko, it's fine. Just take one or two bites if that's all you can handle. Nobody's forcing you to finish it." Satsuki offered her advice in a low voice.

"Yeah! Yeah! What she said. Just try *some* , okay?" Mako held up a croquette to her mouth, causing Ryuko to blush a bit when she caught everybody else's eyes on her.

"Okay, alright. But just a few..." She insisted, leaned forward and eating the one offered to her.

Mako was more than happy when Ryuko ate three more, deciding it was better than nothing.

Satsuki too wasn't any less relieved that Ryuko had finally chosen to eat, but she still knew her well enough to know that if left up to her, she would go right back to neglecting her health. Ryuko *needed* Mako right now, perhaps more than she ever had before.

Satsuki took a sip of the tea Sukuyo had made. It didn't taste like Soroi's, of course, and was much sweeter than the black tea she was used to, but it was wonderful regardless. Tea in *general* was good, so it was fulfilling.

She slowly finished the rest of her food, watching in silence as Ryuko and Mako continued chatting away.

That was until Matoro suddenly inquired about the bandages on her arm out of nowhere, getting way too personal for comfort. "Woah, what happened to your arm? That's a lot of bandages..."

Satsuki's blood ran cold. She felt her face heat up when she noticed that everybody was suddenly looking at her. *Damn* , she had more or less completely forgotten about making sure her arm was completely hidden.

As fast as she could manage, she pulled her arm out of view, holding up her uninjured hand up to cover her other, avoiding eye contact. "It's nothing, just a simple accident is all. But it's alright now, so you don't need to worry about it…

"You sure, Nee-san?" Ryuko asked, chipping in out of some level of concern but not wanting to put too much pressure on her. "Mako's dad here is a doctor, remember? So I'm sure he wouldn't mind giving it a look if you needed him to."

"Yeah, I've treated your sister's injuries on numerous occasions now, so I'm totally fine with looking at yours too if the need arises." Barazo offered as it was brought to his attention.

"No, it's… fine." Satsuki briefly hesitated, her voice weaker voice than intended.

Ryuko could tell something was up just by her body language alone. Satsuki never acted like this, not even back when she was about to shut down the academy, so she was clearly hiding something. Still, it's not it was really any of her business, so she decided to avoid pressing it. It couldn't be anything *that* bad, right?

"Well, if you say so." Barazo smiled. "Just lemme know if you need something, okay? I'm always here to help."

"I know. Thank you." Satsuki tried her best to regain her composure, but failed to return the smile. It was like suddenly, her mind was spiring in hundreds of different directions, no better than earlier. Her heart was pounding loudly in her chest, as she considered numerous possibilities. What if they found out the truth? Surely, they would think her weak or childish for not being able to control herself.

Was deciding to stay the evening a mistake, after all?

Briefly she thought about Ryuko's words earlier.

"You're the only family I have left..."

No , she was here for *her*. It just meant she would have to try harder to keep her arm covered, but she wouldn't leave as long as Ryuko still *wanted* her here. And yet that conclusion didn't help lighten her mood at all. Ryuko had Mako so what good would her being here really do for anybody? How could Ryuko even *call* her a sister? She had been anything but good to her, using and manipulating her and the people she cared about for her own ends.

The thought disgusted her.

Despite her previous choice to not get involved, Ryuko found herself growing increasingly worried for Satsuki upon seeing her mood shifting, and began wondering if she should say something, after all.

However, right as she began questioning that, she found herself being pulled upstairs by an overly excited Mako, who also insisted Satsuki come with them as well. The thought almost immediately slipped her mind.

…

"So I'm thinking we should probably change into some night clothes even if we're not going to bed yet. I'll get Satsuki-sama a night gown that she can use.

Satsuki truthfully wanted long sleeves to cover the bandages on her arm but somehow she felt that would only make her look more suspicious so decided she would have no choice but to take what was offered to her.

"Here. The bathroom is in the room across the hall from us so you can also take a bath if you need to." Mako smiled holding it out.

I see. Thank you." Satsuki said politely as she took the gown in her arms.

A bath was probably a good idea if only to clean the dried blood off her arm that was sticking so harshly to the bandages. She hadn't known she was going to be staying over, however, so she could only hope they had some bandages in the bathroom to replace her old ones with because it would be pointless to clean her arm if she had nothing to dress it with.

…

Fortunately, they did have some in the medicine cabinet so she decided it would be fine.

Reaching down and turning on the faucet, she drew water into the bathtub, before slipping off her clothes. She removed the old bloodied bandages from her arm, throwing them into the trash can and obscuring them underneath some garbage that was already in it.

Once the water was ready, she stepped into the tub. Satsuki tried her best not to think of past unpleasant memories with bathing, but it seemed like Ragyo was insistent on ruining her even after death and she resisted the urge to throw up.

Damn it.

The bitch's hands wouldn't stop, they *never* stopped.

"Humans are such frail things, are they not? When they become naked like this, they become so unbearably uncomfortable. They are immediately overcome with the desire to cover themselves in the miraculous thing that is clothing. That is instinct."

Shut up…

"A species that defies it's instincts will eventually… fall into ruin."

Clawing her arm in a desperate attempt at calming her nerves, she felt bile rising to her throat. Cold fingers prodded at her body, groping her, even going *inside of her* .

Get off… of me…!

As her breathing became more and more erratic, she clutched tightly at her chest. She could hardly think. She felt dizzy, light headed, almost like her oxygen supply was being cut off.

Within a few seconds she stumbled over to the toilet, just as she had earlier that day, throwing up the majority of what she had on her stomach.

That was when something inside of her mind just snapped and the urge to rip her skin to pieces became too strong.

She needed something sharp; something that would silence that damned voice of Ragyo's, even if only for a while.

Her body acting on autopilot, she sifted through drawer after drawer until she finally found what she was looking for.

A safety razor. Certainly better than nothing else. At the very least it would get the job done.

Breaking apart the plastic, she tore out one of the blades, slicing her finger in the process. This time she turned her focus to her other uninjured arm, slashing harshly into the flesh. The sting and sight of the blood almost immediately brought her back to her senses, helping to keep her grounded. And even so she couldn't stop herself from continuing. Her body kept telling her she needed *more*.

Guilt for every little thing she had ever done weighed on her chest, giving her all the less reason to resist.

"What about your *"lofty" ambitions, then? Look at this scorched wasteland. Is this your ambition? A necessary sacrifice? Is this the way you use the power of life fibers?"*

Ryuko's voice echoed in her head, as she recalled the immeasurable amount of damage she'd caused Osaka, buildings destroyed, the smell of fire all around her, Ryuko's hate filled eyes. Regardless of what her intentions had been, nothing would ever make any of that okay.

Never...

Thoughts she thought she had long since buried resurfaced out of nowhere, consuming her against her wishes and the razor blade in her hand began taunting her.

Perhaps Hohomaru leaving her alive was a mistake, after all. Maybe it would be better for everybody if she just ended it. After all, what reason did she have to continue living now that Ragyo had been taken out? Her entire life's ambition had been fulfilled. She had no further purpose nor a reason to live.

But Ryuko… If she found her like that...

"You're the only family I have left."

No .

Satsuki threw the blade in her hand at the wall, feeling frustrated tears well up in her eyes at hearing it clatter on the floor.

She couldn't do that to her. Not to Ryuko. Not to her baby sister.

Curling up and wrapping her arms around her legs, she silently cursed herself for having such disgusting thoughts. She watched as blood freely dripped into the water beneath her, dying it crimson.

Damn it… What's gotten into me…? I need to control myself. Nothing good could possibly come of some petty addiction like this.

Just like last time, she tried to rationalize it again, swearing to herself that she would never pick up a blade for such a trivial purpose again, and yet, looking at the recently created wounds now covering both of her arms, something inside of her felt a sense of calmness despite everything, like it was nothing short of deserved.

Was it punishment, after all? If that was the case... if it made Ragyo's hands and voice stop, then what reason was there to quit this?

Was it not a means of survival instead of death? The gashes on her arms symbolized her sins, as well as the abuse she had endured under Ragyo... It was a physical proof of things she couldn't even bring herself to speak of, and most importantly retribution for the heinous actions which she could never make up for.

Coming upon that realization is when everything made sense. This was the path she'd chosen. This was her *resolve*.

She *needed* to feel this pain, these wounds, if only to stay alive, to *survive*, if not for herself then solely for her *sister* . For Ryuko and the few people in her life that had stayed by her side for years. Nonon would probably never forgive her if she did something like taking her own life, so the only choice for now was to *live*, no matter *what* means she had to use in order to do so.

For now anyway.

…

So this chapter turned out much darker than I originally anticipated, but honestly after rewatching Episode 25 (the OVA) and talking with others, I was thinking that Satsuki showed open signs of being passively if not actively suicidal and was definitely depressed due to not knowing exactly what to do after achieving her goals. I plan to explore that quite a bit throughout this story.

Again, I really hope somebody enjoyed this chapter and would love to hear feedback because it was very hard to write.

Chapter 5

Once again, nothing wierd is intended by this chapter, just sisters being sisters, so if you interpret it any other way, that's completely on you.

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Satsuki quickly found herself feeling more insecure than ever, wishing she had cut herself somewhere else more obscured instead of on her arms, knowing she was going to have to ask for another outfit to wear, after all. Perhaps simply saying she preferred long sleeves would seem suspicious, but it would cause them even more alarm if they saw that her other arm was dressed in bandages as well, especially *this many* , and that wasn't a risk she wanted to take.

And it wasn't just that, but, like earlier, the thought of having so much skin exposed and sleeping in the same room as anybody else just didn't sit well with her.

She let out a deep breath, scolding herself for her thought process. Ryuko and Mako would never do something like Ragyo did to her, nor would anybody else here. They were *nothing* like her. So why did she feel so much anxiety and distrust right now? She should feel safe, and yet she didn't, not even with her own sister.

Realistically, though, how *could* she? Her own so-called "Mother" had sexually forced her into submission on so many occasions that she had lost count. Because of that, her view on what family was supposed to be like had been distorted. It wasn't Ryuko's fault but the association was there and Satsuki couldn't help but feel guilty for it.

It was strange. Months ago she was bragging about how prepared she was to bare her body to the entire world if necessary, but now the thought of anybody seeing her skin at all disgusted her.

And yet she knew down deep that even back then, the fear had been no less real, she was just far better at hiding it and pushing her own personal feelings aside; keeping the skyscraper in her mind in tact.

But when it came to the Elite Four, Iori and Soroi, people she even trusted with her own life, there was always the subconscious fear that one of them would try to take advantage of her and she wouldn't be able to bring herself to fight back or defend herself, freezing up just like she always had with Ragyo. It wasn't rational, *she was fully aware of that*, but it seemed like even after all this time, she was still no different from a traumatized young child. She cursed herself.

"Ryuko, can you come here for a moment?" She called out, peeking out the bathroom door, hoping she would be heard.

Fortunately, Ryuko appeared within moments. "What's up, you need something, Nee-san?"

"It's the night gown Mankanshoku gave me… Does she by chance have anything with long sleeves that I could wear instead? If not, it's fine." Satsuki felt a bit bad for bothering them over something like this, for whatever reason worrying that Ryuko would get annoyed with her.

"Sure, I can ask." Ryuko said after a brief pause of consideration. "Just gimme a second, okay?"

"Thank you." Satsuki said in a low voice.

"Yeah, no problem." Ryuko said walking back to the room to talk with Mako. Moments later she came back with pair of pink polka dotted Pajamas. Satsuki had closed the bathroom door again.

"Hey, Nee-san, Mako picked you out some pajamas. The shirt is long sleeved like you asked for so I hope it'll work." She said, holding them out.

"If you can, leave them down by the door." Satsuki told her. "I'll get them momentarily."

"Alright... Also, if you don't mind me asking, what's up with the accident you mentioned earlier? You get into a fight or something?" Ryuko asked out of curiosity but was secretly a bit concerned based off the way Satsuki had acted earlier when questioned.

"That is *one way* of putting it, I suppose." Satsuki said vaguely, deciding to play along. "There was an incessant voice that wouldn't keep stop crowing, so I dealt with it accordingly."

Yes. A voice indeed… It wasn't a lie. The fewer details, however, she gave the better.

So far, nobody knew what the injuries were but if they happened to see the cuts, there would be nothing she could say or do to deny where they came from and it would certainly cause her far more trouble than it was worth. The Mankanshokus were family to a *doctor, after all* . Barazo might have not been the best out or most competent doctor out there, but he would still recognize something like that from a mile away. Probably even the rest of the family too.

For that matter, Ryuko might not have had any knowledge on treating the injured but she certainly wasn't an idiot. All Satsuki knew was that she had to be extra careful. The last thing she wanted to do right now was warrant unnecessary pity from people she had hurt.

"So who was this person?" Ryuko asked, unknowingly catching her on the spotlight.

That's where Satsuki felt herself hesitate. How was she even supposed to answer that?

"...It doesn't matter." She muttered after a few seconds, a little harsher than intended. "It's over now, so let it go."

"Okay, geez, I was just asking." Ryuko scoffed. She wasn't actually annoyed but she still wanted more details.

"I would simply prefer not to talk about it right now, so try not to take it too personally." Satsuki tried to play it off as cooly as possible, fortunately managing over all.

Ryuko sighed. "...Look, it's if cool you don't want to. I get it. But are you sure you're okay? You've kinda been acting strange ever since Matoro brought it up so I just wanted to check up on you."

"Yes, I'm fine. He just happened to catch me off guard is all." Satsuki said dismissively, giving a small sad smile as she realized she was starting to lie to her sister yet again, only this time over an entirely different matter than before.

"Alright… Well, you *are* Satsuki Kiryuuin, after all, so I'm sure you know what you're up against. It's not like I'm really anybody to talk, considering all the crazy fights I've got myself into over the years. Just be careful, I guess is all I can say. " Ryuko shrugged it off, deciding to believe in Satsuki's better judgement despite her initial doubt. "Anyway, I guess I'll go back to the bedroom then. The clothes are out here next to the door when you wanna get them."

"Right… I will be finished shortly."

…

The Pajamas that Ryuko had brought her had an extremely soft material, and it was a surprisingly perfect fit. The color briefly reminded her of Nonon, who seemed to have a near obsession with bright colors like pink. Rather than having an issue with it, however, Satsuki had always secretly found it kind of cute and even bought her stuffed toys on several occasions as a gift, especially in their younger years. Not that anybody else really knew or suspected where a decent portion of Nonon's collection had come from.

After putting on the PJs, she picked up a brush and began working through the tangles in her hair. Since cutting it, it had been much easier to handle over all. Yet something inside of her kind of regretted chopping so much of it off even though she knew realistically she hadn't really been given much of a choice or it would have been uneven due to Hoomaru slicing a chunk of it off in her last attack. Leaving it like that would have been even more irksome.

Looking into the mirror, she immediately felt disgust in the pit of her stomach as she was reminded of how much how much her face resembled Ragyo's. She had always hated that about herself. No matter how much she had tried to escape Ragyo's hold on her there would

always be similarities they shared which were absolutely unmistakable. Not just her large eyebrows or the shape of her eyes either.

With a click of her tongue, she turned her head away out of frustration, no longer able to bare looking at herself.

Within the next fifteen minutes she had finally finished up everything she needed to do, so she folded up the clothes she had been wearing earlier as well as the night gown and turned the bathroom light off behind her.

…

Mako had fallen asleep almost immediately after picking out the night gown for Satsuki, so in the end, Ryuko was left alone with her own thoughts all over again. She tried to block out the memories but it was impossible.

"Don't cry, Ryuuko…"

Bright fire and the smell of smoke filled her senses, tears welling up in her eyes.

Senketsu had told her not to cry and he would probably tell her that again if he were still here, but she couldn't stop herself. How could she?

Senketsu didn't deserve to die. He was like family to her. Why did it have to be like this?

So what if her dad's purpose in creating him was fulfilled? Senketsu wasn't just some tool to save the world with. He had is his own individuality and feelings just like everybody else. *He deserved to live.*

"I had a wonderful time, meeting you."

She clutched tightly at the fabric of her shirt, hunching over in an attempt to stifle her sobs, not wanting to wake up Mako and worry her again.

She had once said Senketsu was "just a piece of clothing", but that couldn't get farther from the truth. Senketsu was one of the nicest people she knew even if he *wasn't* human. Even after she went berserk and hurt him so badly, he still chose to trust and believe in her. He still forgave her after everything she put him through.

And yet despite swearing she would never do anything like that again, she turned around and let Junketsu take over her body before trying to destroy everything around her and pushing away the people she cared about most.

It was Ragyo's fault too and that bitch Nui as well, but if she had been stronger then none of that would have happened. She might have even been able come up with a more rational plan instead of acting off pure emotions and letting the life fibers control her. As it was she had so many regrets about the way she had handled herself, wishing more than anything she could go back in time and take back the terrible things she had said to him, the horrible things she had done.

"Ryuko." A hand on her shoulder suddenly snapped her out of her thoughts. It was Satsuki.

Ryuko sniffed and sat straight up, wiping away the tears from her eyes. "Oh, hey. Sorry about that. Mako's asleep right now, but there should be enough room here if you wanna go ahead and lay down. I can turn off the light if you need me to."

Her voice was scratchy and Satsuki could tell she was forcing herself(if seeing her crying wasn't already enough proof).

"You don't have to force yourself to hold back for me. It's fine if you need to cry. And if you don't want me to be here, I will respect that as well." Satsuki offered, not entirely sure how she should act in this situation or what was the correct response.

Ryuko reached up and sheepishly tugged at Satsuki's sleeve to keep her from going.

"No, don't leave." Ryuko murmured, a bit desperate. "I…"

"I understand…" Satsuki gave a small smile, already figuring what she wanted to say. "Do you want to talk about it...?"

Ryuko let her bangs cover her eyes as her sister sat down next to her.

"It's like… no matter what I do, everything reminds me of him, I can't…" Ryuko felt tears welling up in her eyes beyond her control. She couldn't even finish her sentence. "I just want this pain go away, already dammit… I can't stand it. I feel like shit cuz I keep dragging Mako and everybody else down with me. Am I… *wrong* for not being able to just get over it?" Ryuko was unable to stop herself from breaking down in sobs again.

"No, you're not… What you're feeling is completely normal and it will pass with time. You shouldn't feel obligated to force yourself to feel better for the sake of others. Just let the feelings come as they come. Nobody except you can tell you how you're supposed to feel." Satsuki tried her best to comfort her, still not completely used to this big sister thing and not wanting to overstep her bounds or come off insensitive.

"Nee-san… Do you… Do you ever think about dad...? I know you said you wished you could have saved him too, but outside of that, I mean." Ryuko inquired.

"Mn… Quite often actually. Why do you ask?" Satsuki titled her head a bit, surprised by the question.

"I was just wondering… What kind of person was he...? I actually don't remember him all that well since he sent me to a boarding school when I was like five. The day he died… I hadn't seen him in over ten years, so a part of me almost didn't know how to feel at first. It seemed like just when I might have a chance to learn something about him and see him again, he..." Ryuko didn't need to finish the sentence for Satsuki to know what she meant.

"I don't know what he was like to you, but our father… He was very kind to me. Kinder than Ragyo *ever* was." Satsuki said after a few seconds, feeling a sense of anxiety creeping up in her chest at the mention of the creature she refused to acknowledge as her mother. "He told me everything, about her experiments with the life fibers, what she planned to do with them and even how she discarded you at birth when you were barely out of the womb. She hadn't even given you a name yet. The only thing I was never made aware of was that you were actually still alive all those years. I don't know why he never said anything about it to me. If I had known, I would have..." Satsuki trailed off into silence, guilt creeping up in her chest all over again.

"...Hey, don't beat yourself up about it." Ryuko smiked lightheartedly, meeting her gaze. "There's no way you could have *possibly* known, right?"

Ryuko then looked away for a moment. "I guess it's true that things would have turned out differently for us if we had known earlier on that we were sisters, but I'm totally fine with things as they are now. Besides, we have the chance to start over as actual family, so who cares what happened in the past? We're here now and that's all that matters."

"...Yes. Family… That is..." At hearing that, Satsuki felt herself hesitate to respond, reaching up and clutching at her arm. The fact that Ryuko still chose to see her as a sister hurt just as much as it did earlier. After everything she had done, how could she-

"What's wrong?" Ryuko snapped her out of her thoughts, noticing her mood shifting again.

"...Over the past few years, I hurt so many people in my path to taking down Ragyo… Not only you and Senketsu but the Mankanshoku family as well, and more people than I can even remember… I destroyed Osaka and obliterated entire towns to get the results I desired. Something like that shouldn't be so easily forgiven… I don't *deserve* happiness after the things I did, so why is everybody being so nice to me...?" Satsuki felt a sense of frustration as she finished, subconsciously fidgeting with her sleeve.

Ryuko was momentarily at a loss of words after that, not used to hearing such cynicism from Satsuki. But then memories of before she had shut down Honnouji Academy and Satsuki's strange behavior back then too hit her again. She herself still wasn't over Senketsu so it'd make sense that Satsuki too still had her own unresolved issues. She looked down, knowing fully well that some of the things she had said was undeniable. Satsuki had caused a lot of

damage for not just Honnou town or Osaka but thousands of people across Japan as well. Even so…

"...It's like I told you before... I don't hate you for what you did, and nor does Mako or anybody else I know. Maybe it's true there are things you could have done differently, but you had to put up with her shit for years, so you knew what kind of person Ragyo was better than any of us, right…? You obviously had a reason for taking the precautions that you did. Besides, after how I acted in Junketsu, I'm in no place at all to talk about some ethics. I'd have probably went crazy if I had been raised by her. Despite that, you stuck your ground and did whatever you had to to take her down. If you hadn't, then we might not even be here right now, so try not to think too much of it." Ryuko avoided eye contact, feeling a bit awkward. "I don't really care about any of that stuff anymore… Most of us are just trying to move forward. And me... I just... wish Senketsu were here. That's all I want. I miss him so bad."

Trying to hold her tears back, she buried her eyes in her hands. As silent sobs once again began wracking her sister's body, Satsuki's heart ached. She knew she had to do something instead of just sitting there and watching.

So even though a part of her was afraid she might be making a wrong move, she reached up with apprehension and pulled Ryuko into a gentle hug.

Once again, she had to remind herself there was nothing wrong about this, despite the feeling of hands crawling on her and exploring her body. It was only her imagination. There was nothing wrong at all with comforting her sister.

Some of Ryuko's crying stopped at the unexpected embrace, but she made no attempt to push her away, so Satsuki could only hope Ryuko was okay with it as well. Fortunately, since the younger one returned embrace after a moment, Satsuki could assume her gesture had been well received despite the uncertainty she was still feeling.

"When I heard that our father had died, it felt like a part of my entire world was gone." Satsuki murmured. "I quickly found myself consumed with bitterness towards Ragyo, because I knew she was responsible for it... And yet I was never allowed the time to properly grieve because I was so focused on getting revenge against her, not just for him, but you as well, Ryuko."

This caught Ryuko's attention. She couldn't help but look up a bit.

"Even words alone can't describe the sense of relief I felt, but also fear, upon realizing that my little sister was still alive after all those years." Satsuki continued. "As soon as that damn woman called you her daughter, I already knew that she would try to use you in her plan to enslave humanity and I'm truly sorry I wasn't able to do more to help you. If I could, I would also have found some way to save Senketsu from dying so you wouldn't be in so much pain right now. I feel as though part of the fault lies with me. I'm fully aware I can't take away the hurt you're feeling right now, but wish I could do more for you."

Ryuko was silent for a moment. Ever since Satsuki had rebelled against Ragyo, she had been apologetic and almost a completely different person at times than what she was used to(which was, of course to be expected). A bit of laughter bubbled up in her throat somehow, finding it amusing.

"...Geez, hearing you all upset and guilty just makes me feel even worse than I already did." She pulled back, sniffing. "Look, I told you before it's not your fault, so stop blaming yourself already, Nee-san."

"Ryuko-" Satsuki started to speak but felt the words catch in her throat when Ryuko leaned her head against her shoulder just like she had earlier that day.

"Sorry... You mind lending me your shoulder again...?" Ryuko asked in a sheepish voice her eyes burning with unshed tears. "I just need to get this out of my system… I try to be back to normal soon."

"Yes. It's fine." Satsuki gave a small smile, placing a hand on her head in an affectionate manner. "Take as much time you need."

…

Wow lol. Lots of sisterly angst and fluff. I hope somebody enjoyed this, because I plan for more to come. :)

Chapter 6

NSFW SEXUAL ASSAULT SCENE AHEAD BECAUSE OF NIGHTMARE. SKIP PAST ITALICS IF THAT COULD TRIGGER YOU. The scene was very hard for me to write because of my own experiences. So I understand if it makes people uncomfortable enough to skip.

...

Ragyo was on top of her. Both of them were naked.

"Just relax, dear. Now what is it that I always tell you...?" Ragyo purred.

"You've said… Resistance is… futile." Satsuki tried to fight back at first but, much to her frustration, her instincts had betrayed her.

She was left defenseless and vulnerable, with no control over the way her own body was responding..

"Yes, that is correct. So obedient. You make your mother prouder every day, Satsuki." Ragyo smirked down at her, caressing the soft skin of her cheek, before sliding a long icy cold finger inside of her and penetrating her walls.

Satsuki bit her lip and looked away, unable to bear the humiliation of having her mother see her this way. It was disgusting. None of this was right. This kind of thing wasn't supposed to happen between a parent and a child and yet it did.

And for Satsuki, consent *was never something she had the choice to give. It was* always ***taken*** *from her.*

She had learned from personal experience on far too many occasions that just letting it happen *was the only answer; the only conclusion she had come to* ***- the rationalization which always made everything go by quicker.***

Satsuki had long since tuned out most of the things Ragyo was saying, trying her best to focus on distracting herself as the monster continued traversing her hands over Satsuki's slim body in whatever which way she desired.

Satsuki continuously cursed herself for each and every involuntary moan that escaped her mouth.

Ragyo leaned forward to whisper into her ear with a sinister smile, clearly more than happy to get her desired reaction.

"Do you get it now? **This... "** *She groped her, and Satsuki's face immediately heated up more than it already was, her body's instincts completely betraying her mind which told her that this was wrong. " is the true nature of humanity.* **This** *is what your body desires; what it craves more than anything else… Absolute submission . That is the only reason why you exist in the first place, after all. You were* born *to be ruled over. Your body belongs to me. Rather, it belongs to the* life fibers *, and as long as you give yourself up to them, the entire* world *can be yours. Tell me… Doesn't that sound wonderful?"*

Even though she wanted no part of what Ragyo was speaking of, Satsuki already knew she had only one choice: To obey .

"...Yes… Mother."

…

END NSFW SCENE

...

Satsuki woke up in a cold sweat, gasping for air as she sat up. Her mind was far too hazy to process her environment, part of her convinced that Ragyo was still there.

"Hey, what's wrong?!"

A voice .

A hand reached out to touch her. To grab her. She was certain it was *hers* .

But Ragyo was gone. No, she was right there. Always…

Suddenly, terror filled her mind and she did the only thing the current circumstances would allow her to:

Submit.

Just let it happen .

Resistance will only make everything worse.

Resistance is futile .

That was the answer she had decided for herself, so why couldn't she breath?

If it meant fulfilling her ambitions, she was prepared do *anything* .

Even if it meant allowing herself to be degraded in such a way as this. She didn't have a choice to begin with.

…

Ryuko herself had been awake for quite some time due to not being able to sleep properly, so she didn't fail to notice when Satsuki woke up in such a state.

"H-hey, what's wrong! Nee-san!"

She reached out to touch her sister's shoulder in an attempt to offer comfort. However, she quickly regretted it when Satsuki flinched at the sudden contact, pulling in on herself. Satsuki's breaths became even more erratic by the second.

"Ryuko-chan...? What's going on with Satsuki-sama...?" Mako asked in a tired voice but also out of concern, having just woken up due to the commotion. As long as she had known Satsuki, she was always composed and never let her emotions, minus anger, show, so seeing her like this was no doubt a shock to both of them.

"I don't know, I think she had a nightmare or something. She was like this as soon as she woke up." Ryuko said moving around the bed so she could Satsuki face to face. "Nee-san... *Satsuki* , talk to me. *Damn it…!* Mako, go get your dad! He's gotta know what to do."

"Okay, you got it!" Mako said, getting up and running down stairs to call out for her dad.

Ryuko felt helpless as she watched her sister falling to pieces in front of her. What could have upset her this badly? Why did she look so scared? Satsuki was never the type to let her emotions get the better of her, at least not to this extent, so Ryuko honestly didn't even know how to respond.

Mako fortunately returned with Barazo in the next minute.

"You needed something? What's up?" He asked, approaching them. Sukuyo and Matoro had been woken up as well and was peeking in the door.

"Yeah, it's Nee-san. All of a sudden she freaked out and now she's not responding." Ryuko hoped he could help.

"Hm… It looks like she's having a panic attack…" Barazo assumed. "Can you move back a bit?"

"Oh, yeah, sure." Ryuko did as asked, letting Barazo sit down next to Satsuki.

"...Satsuki-chan, can you look at me? I can tell you're scared right now but I'm not going to hurt you. I need you to listen to my voice and breath with me as I say, alright? Here. In... Out... In... Out... In... Out..." As he said that, Satsuki slowly seemed to be recovering bit by bit.

It was really hard to believe just by looking at her now that this girl was same person who used to stand up on a pedestal, ruling over an entire town of people without wavering. That's when he had to remind himself that Satsuki was still a just teenager beneath the facade she had held up. A truly kind child who had suffered unthinkable torment because of her own mother. And from what he knew about Ragyo, it had to be rougher growing up under her than anybody could possibly imagine.

Even now, Satsuki was just trying her best to get by and nobody in their right mind could fault her for that.

He gave a small smile in hopes it would offer her some comfort. "...That's it. You're doing great... Just keep it up."

After what felt like an eternity the light in Satsuki's eyes returned and she had finally calmed down, but she looked drained.

"How are you feeling?" Barazo asked.

"...I'm fine… Thank you…" Satsuki replied weakly, feeling bad for have woken everybody up over something this trivial.

"Don't mention it… Your sister was really worried about you, so I guess I'll leave you girls alone now." Barazo said.

"Geez, what the hell, Nee-san? You seriously scared the crap out of me." Ryuko joked, not intending any harm by what she had said. But it wasn't received well by Satsuki in the slightest, who felt worse than ever for causing them so much trouble.

"I'm sorry… I don't know what came over me. I should have controlled myself better." Satsuki murmured in frustration, letting her bangs shadow her eyes.

From in the door Sukuyo gave a saddened smile as she urged Matoro back downstairs following behind him as he whispered questions to her about what was going on. Barazo left as well, going with them

Ryuko's smile faded, suddenly feeling bad for chastising her.

"It's fine, you don't gotta apologize to me, but will you at least tell me what that was about? What even upset you?" On instinct, Ryuko almost touched Satsuki on the shoulder again but restrained herself when she saw her tense up, a hidden fear in her eyes. Despite the appearance Satsuki was so desperately trying to hold up, Ryuko could see it now all too well. Her vulnerability, her distrust, and more than anything, the hurt and betrayal that she was feeling.

"What..." Ryuko pulled her hand back, disturbed her sister's behavior.

"Oh, I forgot to mention." Mako suddenly interjected. "I don't know if she told you, but Satsuki-sama doesn't seem to like being touched very much. I noticed it yesterday when I tried to hug her. She was totally uncomfortable with it and even asked me to let go. I'm not sure why, though. Who *doesn't* like getting hugs?"

"..Physical… contact…?" It took a moment for Ryuko to process what Mako was saying, and that's when the realization dawned on her. She she gazed back over at Satsuki. "Wait, is that *true*... ?!"

On one hand, it could have just been Satsuki being Satsuki, and down deep, Ryuko wanted to believe that *was* the case. However, when the other turned her head away, unable to even utter a single word in response, Mako's accusation had basically been confirmed, and judging by Satsuki's body language, Ryuko could tell it wasn't just a simple preference, she was genuinely afraid.

"Hey, why didn't you just tell me it made you uncomfortable? How was I supposed to know?" Ryuko scratched the back of her head. " *Shit* , so it's *my* fault you freaked out then? All this time I've been… God, I'm such an idiot…!"

"No, stop, it isn't your fault." Satsuki looked at her desperately before gazing down at her arm and rubbing her shoulder. "I never told you about my fear because I deemed it trivial and more than that, I wanted you to focus on your own problems instead of mine. As it seems, I failed at that."

Satsuki uttered the last part bitterly. "As for what triggered my… *reaction* earlier… it was simply a bad nightmare and nothing more. You needn't worry."

That was the same thing she had said several times throughout her visit here and at this point it had lost whatever meaning it previously had. Ryuko couldn't stand hearing her repeat herself when she clearly wasn't okay.

"Yeah, but-" Ryuko started to protest, but Mako beat it to her.

"Hold it right there, Satsuki-sama! Have you forgotten that you two are family?!" Mako exclaimed, cutting her off. Satsuki and Ryuko were speechless and didn't have to say anything before she continued. "That's right, you're *sisters* , and sisters are supposed to trust in each other all the way! Spill your whole HEART out if you have to. Just because Ryuko-chan has problems *too* doesn't mean you can't talk about your *own* sometimes. I have no idea what you've went through up to now or what your nightmare was about, but it's totally normal to look to your sister for comfort. I know because that's exactly what family is supposed to be there for! You can totally trust me on that."

Satsuki's eyes were momentarily wide with dumbfoundment. After a second both her and Ryuko smirked a bit.

Typical Mako .

"Yeah, what she said." Ryuko pointed to Mako with her thumb, a bit awkwardly. "It's like I told you yesterday. If you ever need to talk about something, I'm here to listen to you."

Satsuki looked away, as if contemplating her response. *Could she trust them, after all?*

"…The dream I had... It was about Ragyo…" she started weakly, ever so hesitantly. "Every time I saw that woman, she..."

No .

Satsuki's resolve was almost immediately sapped, her voice cracking. Any words she had previously wanted to say got lost in her throat as she subconsciously dug into her arms where the bandages were.

There was no use whatsoever in reflecting on the past, it wouldn't change what had happened to her. There was nobody in the world, no amount of reassurance or words, that could erase the pain she was feeling right now.

Besides, If Ryuko or anybody else found out about the things Ragyo did to her, they would think she was disgusting for not being strong enough to resist her. Even her body… it had-

Her shoulders slightly began shaking as she barely resisted the urge to vomit.

At the single mention of Ragyo's name, everything suddenly became clear to Ryuko. Satsuki's fear of being touched. Her nightmare and panic attack, possibly even her recent strange behavior as well… It was all connected to *her* .

...Abuse?

At least that was the only logical conclusion she had been able to come to. And yet down deep, from hearing what Satsuki implied, she could tell it went much deeper than that. Most likely it had went on for *years* . Not just once or twice but *countless* times, all the way since childhood. She had grown up around Ragyo, after all, so there was no *telling* what she'd endured under her.

"Nee-san, if she... *did* something to you, you can tell me… I wanna know what's wrong…" Ryuko urged with concern, hoping more than anything that Satsuki would trust her despite her doubts. Ragyo had done something really bad to her sister and it hurt like hell just knowing that. She wanted to help, wanted to do or say something to take her pain away.

"...I…" Satsuki started to say, but in the end, she lost her nerve. "It's not important. Forget I said anything.."

After that, Ryuko already knew that trying to get Satsuki to open up more would be next to impossible at this point. Even *attempting* to press the matter might end up sending Satsuki into another panic attack and that was the last thing she want to do.

She sighed. "Alright, I won't press it then, but look, it's like Mako said. You can trust me. No matter what it is, I'm not gonna judge you. So when you're ready to talk, I swear I'll be there."

As Ryuko said that, Satsuki felt something inside of her lighten up. Even if she hadn't opened up, just knowing that Ryuko was trying to comfort her made her feel happy somehow.

"H-hey…" Ryuko blushed a bit when Satsuki softly pulled her into a hug fully of her own volition.

"Thank you..., Ryuko. That means more to me than you could ever know." Satsuki murmured, tears whelling up in her eyes.

"Don't... mention it. But are you sure you're okay with this? You're…-" Ryuko didn't want Satsuki to

"It is fine." Satsuki assured her. "I will be alright."

In truth, she was saying it more to herself than even to Ryuko. That's right, Ragyo wasn't here anymore. Ryuko didn't see her in that way. There was no need to be afraid.

"Well, alright, if you say so." Ryuko, wanting to trust her, reached up and returned the embrace with a small grin.

"No fair, I want a hug too!" Mako pouted, folding her arms.

Ryuko laughed a bit hearing that. Satsuki herself smirked a bit, and let Ryuko go.

"Geez, Mako, you're such a handful, you know that?" Ryuko teased before jumping on top of her.

"Maybe, but I'm *your* handful." Mako pointed out.

"Yeah, I guess I can't deny that." Ryuko said, giving her a hug as she'd asked.

"In all seriousness, though… Satsuki-sama?" Mako looked over at Satsuki who had briefly looked away.

"What is it?" Satsuki inquired at hearing her name.

"I don't any have clue what it is that the director did to you to make you so scared, but you're not alone here. After all, you're Ryuko-chan's sister, so that means you're practically like family to *us* too now!"

"Family, huh...?" A part of Satsuki was surprised at hearing that. She knew down deep that she didn't deserve such a thing, but felt inclined to thank Mako for her gesture in spite of that. "Thank you. I appreciate it."

Both of the sisters knew they were nowhere near even *remotely* resolving *any* of their problems, but they had at least taken a step forward to become a bit closer, and that initiative was most certainly better than doing nothing at all.

From here on out, they knew it would just take time. It wasn't something to be rushed but just maybe… they would get there eventually.

...

A/N: Wow touchy chapter there and cheesy chapter end but I hope somebody enjoyed it.

Chapter 7

A/N: Decided a temporary change in setting because I'm wanting to get Nonon involved too, but, don't worry, we'll be back to the Mankanshokus soon enough. Also, there's some inspiration from the OVA which is why Satsuki's acting like she is. In the OVA she showed open signs of being borderline suicidal and depressed. It just tore me to pieces but it's great for content, so anyway. Onto the story.

Ever since Satsuki's panic attack, she had been much quieter than before, making occasional comments on discussions and stuff, but Ryuko could tell that her heart wasn't in it. She still didn't know many of the details of the nightmare Satsuki had had. Right now she could only assume, and seeing her depressed like this, it really hurt.

"I think it is about time I should leave." Satsuki said that evening with a solemn look on her face to Ryuko. "I fear I might end up overstaying my welcome if I don't."

Hadn't she already caused enough trouble as it was? Getting Ryuko worried about her certainly wasn't part of her plan.

Ryuko, however, seemed much more disappointed than Satsuki had anticipated.

"Wait, already? Don't you wanna stay a little longer?" She asked, practically begging her.

Satsuki felt guilt consume her chest and she looked away. It wasn't that she wanted to leave Ryuko's side but she was certain being here had only been counterproductive to Ryuko's recovery.

"I am sorry, but I really should be getting back home." Satsuki said. Without even realizing what she was doing, she softly stoked Ryuko on the top of her head in a reassuring manner to keep her from being too upset. "Do not worry, I can come back if you want me to."

Ryuko blushed a bit at the affection, but she wasn't satisfied in the slightest. For the first time in forever, she actually felt somewhat happier than usual. Even if Satsuki was worrying the hell out of her, it was as Mako said, they were still *family* and they had a chance to fix what had been taken from them by circumstances, to completely start over from scratch. Even if it was only a little longer, she wanted to spend as much time as she could with her new found family. A big sister, something she would have never even *dreamed* of having.

Besides, after losing Senketsu, it was especially hard to manage her current feelings. Even if it was only for a little bit longer, she wanted to spend more time with her, get to know her better. That wasn't even mentioning how worried she had been for her since that morning.

"Then let me come with you!" Ryuko shouted out in response, receiving a surprised look from Satsuki. It took a moment to process what she had just said. She scratched her cheek awkwardly. "Wait, I mean… I was just thinking that I'm gonna be going back to high school in a month from now, so… Maybe spending a little bit of time together as family before then would be… a good thing? It's totally cool if you don't want to, I was just thinking… maybe a few days or something…"

"It is fine. I am aware of what you meant." Satsuki said softly. "And I will not stop you if you are certain that that is what you really want to do. Will she coming as well?"

Down deep, Satsuki was happy, but also felt sort of insecure at the prospect of Ryuko staying with her, afraid that she wouldn't be able to provide all the emotional support her she needed right now. And with her own current issues, her concerns were even greater.

"Oh, yeah. About that..." Ryuko turned to Mako, "Mako, do you want to come with me, or…?"

"Hmm… Nah, I think I'll just stay here with Mom and Dad, unless you really want me to come. After all, it's only for a few days, right? You can always call me if you need something. Besides, you finally have a chance to bond with Satsuki-sama, isn't that great?" Mako said excitedly.

"Y-Yeah." Ryuko smiled a bit awkwardly. In truth, she was really happy about it, but she couldn't express that very well and saying that in front of Satsuki would only be embarrassing. "I'll get my stuff. I don't have a lot so it won't take me long."

"Alright. Take your time. I will be waiting at the front door in the meantime." Satsuki said as she began heading down stairs.

"Oh, Satsuki-chan, are you leaving?" Sukuyo saw her when she entered the kitchen area.

"Yes. However, I appreciate you allowing me to stay the night. I hope it would not be a problem if I borrowed Ryuko for a few days." Satsuki smiled.

"No, of course not. She is your sister after all, so spend as much time with her as you'd like. It may not seem like it, but she's been a lot happier ever since you came over." Sukuyo told her.

"I would say thank you, but your daughter deserves far more credit than I. I only did what I felt was right in the moment, but she's the one who truly understands Ryuko, better than I could ever hope to." Satsuki felt awkward at receiving such praise.

"Oh, don't be so modest now, dear. Ryuko-chan looks up to you more than you even know." Sukuyo smiled.

Satsuki considered her words with deep thought before looking down and subconsciously grasping her arm where her injuries lied. "...I am afraid I am not deserving of such things. For her to hold me in such a high regard, much less see me as her *sister* , after everything I did to her- it's imperceivable… If anything, you all should hate me for the things I've done."

"On the contrary, dear, we're *grateful* to you. If not for you and Ryuko-chan, this planet would have been destroyed." Sukuyo pointed out, catching Satsuki off guard. "Most kids would have ran away in your situation, but you stuck your ground anyways and did whatever you had to to save humanity from that terrible mother of yours."

"Yes, but…" Satsuki started to say. However, Sukuyo beat her to it.

"No 'buts' about it, young lady." Sukuyo suddenly went into her assertive 'mom mode' and it automatically became clear where Mako got her personality from. "All you have to do from now on is live and move forward with your life. After all, you're still just a teenager and teenagers are supposed to listen to their elders when they tell them something."

Satsuki, however, didn't seem so sure about it. She fidgeted with the hem of her shirt, avoiding eye contact until Sukuyo gently took her hand to get her attention.

"Look at me… It's totally fine for you to have regrets sometimes. It just proves you have a good heart. Still, you can't let your past dictate what kind of life you're allowed to have from here on out. Do you understand what I'm saying...?"

"...Yes, I think so… Thank you…" Satsuki said sheepishly. It was rare for her to feel this way, but hearing such kind words left her at a near loss of words on how to respond. Satsuki had never had a good experience with the concept of what a mother was supposed to be like, but this woman... she was truly kind, the kind of mother something deep inside of her had always wished Ragyo had been like.

Sukuyo gave a pain filled smile, looking back down at Satsuki's hand again. "...Also… There's something I've been wanting to ask you about,, if you wouldn't mind."

"What is it…?" Satsuki gazed back up at her.

Sukuyo was hesitant for a moment before asking, not wanting to make Satsuki uncomfortable. "Those injuries on your arm, the ones beneath your bandages… They're… not actually from an accident, *are* they...?"

Satsuki was immediately caught off guard. She looked down, her face filled with guilt, knowing fully well what Sukuyo was implying.

"...How could you tell?" Her voice was weaker than usual, not certain how Sukuyo was going to respond, afraid that she was going to be judged for being so weak.

"Well, I *am* a mother and my husband is a doctor, so you could say I just have a knack for spotting these sorts of things." Sukuyo reminded her. The truth was she and Barazo had had their suspicions for a while now but she had just needed a confirmation from Satsuki herself.

Satsuki noted what she was saying. "… If you already knew, then why did you only bring it up now...?"

"Because I didn't want to scare you or make a scene in front of the others… I know talking about that sort of thing can be really hard for some people, so I wanted to wait until you were a bit more comfortable before asking about it. You don't have to tell me why you did you it, but…" Sukuyo started a bit reluctantly, not wanting to sound too pushy. "have you… ever maybe considered getting a therapist to talk about… you know… your *mother* …? What you went through because of her… I can't begin to imagine what it must have been like."

Satsuki, however, immediately made her stance clear, bangs shadowing her eyes. "I appreciate your concern, but I have no need for a therapist. Talking about the past will not change anything..."

"...I figured you might say that…" Sukuyo sighed, feeling at a loss of what to do. "...Do you at least have somebody you could go to when you feel like that? Like a friend maybe?"

"A friend…" Satsuki murmured. The only purpose that really came to mind was Nonon, but asking her for advice on this after rejecting her would be nothing short of selfish. "There is one, but bothering her with such trivial matters would be selfish of me. This is my problem to deal with and nobody else's."

The last sentence came out harsher than intented, as she glared at her feet.

Right before Sukuyo could speak back up, Ryuko was already headed down stairs.

"Okay, I've got my stuff. I'm ready to go whenever you are." Ryuko grinned excitedly.

"In that case, I suppose we will be going now." Satsuki placed a hand on her sister's head like she had earlier before turning back to Sukuyo. "I should have her back here in few days give or take so try not to worry about her too much, alright?"

"Take care of her, Satsuki-chan. You too, Ryuko-chan. Sisters need to look out for each other, right?" Sukuyo said, a bit saddened to hear how Satsuki wanted to carry such a burden alone. Ryuko blushed a bit as Sukuyo pulled her into a hug.

"I know it may not seem like it, but Satsuki-chan needs your support right now just as much as you need hers, so keep an eye out for her." Sukuyo whispered to her.

"Yeah, I know…" Ryuko whispered back with a downcast look. "That's part of why I'm going."

"RYUUUUUKO-CHAN!" Mako suddenly flew down stairs, startling both Ryuko and Satsuki. "Hughughughughug!"

"Woah, hey, calm down!" Ryuko laughed a bit as Mako flung herself on her. "I'm hugging you now, aren't I?"

"Yeah, but now I want a kiss too before you go." Mako insisted, stealing one from her. Ryuko's face turned bright red because of the fact that both Sukuyo and Satsuki were watching them, but she happily returned it anyway.

"Alright, I'll see you again in a few days, so take care of yourself, Mako." Ryuko said, pulling away, before she returned to Satsuki's side.

"I wiiiill. You don't need to worry about me." Mako reassured her, as they took their leave.

Sure, it would be a bit lonely without Ryuko around, but she would manage. Besides, if not for Satsuki, Ryuko would probably just be laying in bed right now, so seeing her this motivated for a change offered a huge amount of reassurance. Even if Ryuko did fall into

another one of her depressive states again, she at least wouldn't be alone. Satsuki was there for her and right now, even she could tell giving them that space to make those calls for themselves was the best option.

...

"We're here."

"Holy crap… Wait, you live *here* ?! You never told me you owned a *mansion* , Nee-san!" The first thing Ryuko had noticed when they arrived at Satsuki's place was, of course, the size of her house. "This place is friggen huge!"

"I would have thought it would have been possible to assume, considering my status, but I suppose not." Satsuki noted quietly as Ryuko followed her into the house.

"It's looks even bigger from the inside. Hey, didn't you have a butler before?" Ryuko inquired.

"I assume you mean Soroi. And the answer to your question is yes, but I relieved him of his duties not too long ago. I live alone. Now that REVOCS went bankrupt and Ragyo is out of the picture, I have no further need for servants." Satsuki explained simply. "Do you want some tea?"

"Sure, as long as it's not poisoned." Ryuko joked a bit.

"Hmph." Satsuki scoffed a bit at Ryuko's remark. "Please. You should know by now that I have much more tact than to pull something *that* cowardly."

"True, that sounds more like something up Ragyo or Nui Harime's alley. Those bitches *would* pull some cheap trick like that." Ryuko muttered bitterly.

"Ragyo and Nui Harime knew nothing *except* cheap tricks to win their battles, and yet... I am not much better than them, especially Ragyo. If it meant achieving my goals, then I was prepared to do anything I had to, even trample over the lives and will of others to get the results I desired." Satsuki muttered bitterly.

"Nee-san…" Ryuko started to speak, when Satsuki handed her a glass with a downcast look on her face.

"Here." Satsuki said, receiving a small thanks from Ryuko. After a while, Ryuko spoke up again.

"...You're wrong, you know..." she muttered.

"Oh? How so?" Satsuki was clearly indifferent. She had already made up her mind on her feelings.

"...You're not... like them..." Ryuko told her, suddenly thinking of her own predicament as well.

"You did not know Ragyo as well as I did. I grew up around her and witnessed all of her worst traits first hand for *years*. Just knowing that I have the same *face* as that *monster disgusts* me."

"Yeah, well try having the same *body* as her! Have you forgotten that I'm a life fiber monster as well...?!" Ryuko suddenly snapped, catching her off guard. There we're tears in her eyes.

"Ryuko, I-" Satsuki cursed herself for what she had said.

Ryuko clenched her fists, and her voice was trembling. "I have to live with this goddamn reminder every single day that I'm not normal - that I never *will* be. Senketsu was the only

person in the world that truly understood what I was going through, because he was a hybrid just like me, but now he's gone, just like our Dad and everybody else… Damn it… You really think I don't understand what it's like to be *Ragyo's daughter*... ?"

That was where any composure Ryuko had left just came crumbling down and something in her snapped, tears now freely flowing from her eyes. Satsuki hadn't expected her to fall to pieces just like that, but she shouldn't have been surprised. When a person was grieving, *anything* could set them off.

"No... I am sorry, Ryuko... I should not have said what I did without considering your feelings. I swear my intentions were not to upset you." Satsuki reached out and pulled Ryuko into an embrace in a desperate attempt to comfort her, knowing it was her own fault this time.

For the longest time, Ryuko didn't say anything in return, only tightly clutching at the fabric of Satsuki's shirt, letting out her feelings as they came.

Satsuki quite frankly felt terrible now.

"...Ryuko, after we finish our tea, why don't I show you around the manor?" She offered. "After all, since you are my sister, it is only natural that this house would be yours as well."

"Wait, you mean it?" Ryuko gawked at her in disbelief, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Yes." Satsuki told her, holding up her spare key with a slight smirk.

Ryuko beamed, unable to resist from hugging her. "Holy shit, Nee-san, you really *are* the best! Thanks!"

Despite her initial discomfort, seeing Ryuko happy again was enough to make Satsuki forget about it.

"It is fine, really." She stroked the top of Ryuko's head. "But make sure you finish your tea first, okay?"

Ryuko immediately grinned. "You got it."

...

Ryuko had only stayed in a mansion one other time in her life which was back when she and Mako were running the fight club at Honnouji Academy, and yet she was pretty sure this was even larger.

What especially surprised her, however, was the size of the bath, which was the last thing Satsuki had to show her. She had already seen all the other rooms and temporarily placed her bag in the guest area.

Steam surrounded them as they approached the large bath.

So many bad memories were associated with this place which usually caused Satsuki to actively avoid it as much as possible. However, it was part of the house so she had no choice but to show it to Ryuko.

"This is the bath house." She said. "Feel free to soak yourself in the water at any time."

"...Hey wait, sisters bathe together all the time, right?" Ryuko thought out loud, a little awkwardly. "Then maybe... we could do that too sometime."

What she didn't expect, however, was Satsuki's reaction.

"No, I..." Satsuki turned her head away, grabbing the fabric of sleeve. This wasn't even about the wounds on her arm this time, but bathing with family… Even though it wasn't inherently

wrong in their culture, Ragyo had… "I do not think that would be wise. It is nothing personal again you, but I think we should bathe separately."

It's not like Ryuko could have possibly known about her trauma and distrust associated with bathing around other people, but she didn't need to know about any of that. *Nobody did* .

Ryuko *could* , however, tell that Satsuki was genuinely bothered by it so it was probably best not to press the matter.

…

Later on, Satsuki ended up ordering Chinese food after clearing it with Ryuko. Ryuko had said she was okay with it, but Satsuki felt disappointed when she saw Ryuko hadn't touched anything in her plate at all, and yet she knew she should have expected this.

"Ryuko, you need to eat. I can always order something else if you don't want it." She offered.

"No, it's not that,...I'm just not hungry right now… I'll eat later." Ryuko said dismissively, avoiding eye contact. She didn't know where the agitation was even coming from, she was just... angry. She knew it wasn't rational, she always had Senketsu with her when she ate. Without him, it felt wrong, *lonely* .

Satsuki could already tell that Ryuko actually had no intentions to eat and was only saying she would 'later' to placate her. In reality, she would just keep putting it off.

"Ryuko-" Satsuki started to press the matter further and that was when something in Ryuko just… *snapped . Again* .

"Look, if I said I'm not hungry then I'm *not hungry* , so just drop it already...! Everybody keeps bugging me about my diet, it's so annoying...! I'll eat when I feel like it! It's none of your business...!" Ryuko only realized the things she had said afterwards, feeling a tinge of guilt in her chest, remembering how depressed Satsuki had been to begin with. What was she

even saying? Why was she lashing out at her like this? It was like she was barely even able to control her emotions anymore. Sometimes she felt like bursting into tears, other times she just went off the rails with next to no reason at all.

Fortunately, due to their history, Satsuki was rather used to being a target of Ryuko's anger, so she wasn't really fazed by it, but that's not to say it was pleasant being shouted at either. And yet… she knew that Ryuko deserved to let off as much steam as she needed to. She was hurt and confused and that was okay. The best way to handle this was rationally. Retaliation would only make things worse.

"...I am sorry. My intentions were not to upset you. I suppose it was selfish of me to express concern for my baby sister, and yet I could not stop myself. Feel free to hit me for that as well, if it will help you feel better about what you're going through." Exhaustion seeped from her voice as Satsuki rubbed at her arm where her bandages were. She looked down, knowing whatever Ryuko chose to do she had no right to interfere at this point. Besides, she was the most resented woman in Japan, what was one more to hate her, even if that *was* her last surviving family member? She could take whatever Ryuko dished out at her. It was the *least* she could offer to ease the pain in her sister's heart.

"...Satsuki… Are you *serious* right now...?" Ryuko's anger immediately faded at seeing how defeated Satsuki looked.

She didn't know why she reverted to saying her first name again, but she did. Something about it just felt right with the situation. After all, this wasn't only about her sister anymore. This was about the woman who'd once so proudly stood up against their mother no matter how much she was knocked down and seeing her like this scared her more than she could even fathom.

The next words that left her mouth send a chill up Ryuko's spine:

"Yes. Go ahead. Is it not what I deserve?"

Ryuko grew silent at hearing that, worried by Satsuki's body language and afraid if she didn't say something now then she would really regret it. The look in her sister's eyes certainly wasn't one you'd from somebody who was trying to live, it was of somebody who'd almost given up on life, the same expression she had months ago. Truthfully, it scared her.

"...I… Look, I'm not gonna hit you, alright? I said some really shitty things just now. I shouldn't have snapped at you like that…" Ryuko muttered awkwardly.

When Satsuki didn't respond, almost seeming detached, Ryuko grew a bit disparaged desperate to get her to snap out of the funk.

"Hey, if it makes you feel better, I'll eat, okay?"

For a long moment Satsuki was quiet but then spoke up again.

"...I cannot help but question if it was wrong of me to desire a family, after all. I really am trying to help you,, but I fear I am only making everything worse just by being here."

Ryuko didn't exactly know what she meant by "here", but it was concerning nonetheless.

"Stop saying that!" Ryuko snapped, startling Satsuki a bit. "I thought I didn't have a right to have a family either, but Mako's family accepted me anyway. Maybe it's not really the exact same thing, but I want this too. For us to be able to be sisters. I took my anger out on you and that was wrong of me. I just… really don't want you to do anything reckless because of me… If I lost you, I…"

"I understand. As long as you need me, then I will stay." Satsuki gave a pain filled smile.

"Yeah, but even after that!" Ryuko insisted, gaining a surprised look from Satsuki. She didn't really know why she was giving this lecture; she frequently had those kinds of thoughts herself. "You can't… You can't just give up like that. You have so many people who care about you. Like that Jakuzure chick. I've never seen anybody more devoted to a person aside from Mako. If you did something, can you imagine how much that would hurt her?"

"Nonon… She confessed to me yesterday..." Satsuki mumbled, trying to change the subject in the best way she could. Even though romance wasn't a subject Satsuki liked talking about, anything was better than what they were currently discussing.

"Wait, really?" Ryuko was surprised, but smirked a bit at hearing that. "What did you say?"

"…I turned her down." Satsuki looked away.

"Why? Do you not like her?" Ryuko wanted to know, a bit disappointed. To be fair, she didn't know anything about Satsuki's sexual orientation or who she liked, so if she wasn't into girls that really wasn't surprising.

"No, it is not that." Satsuki clarified, basically confirming that she had feelings for Nonon as well. "It is just… There are many things I feel I would not capable of offering in a relationship."

She was hesitant to specify her hang ups, but Ryuko seemed to get it.

"Like what? Oh, you mean sex...?" Ryuko assumed.

"Yes..." Satsuki looked down a bit feeling uncomfortable about admitting it aloud. "Is sex not considered by most to be the basis of a relationship? If I said yes, I am almost certain she would expect that of me sooner or later and I have no desire for such a thing. It scares me. But it would be selfish of me to ask Nonon to deal with that."

Ryuko was silent for a moment, piecing everything together.

With Satsuki's fear of physical contact, she supposed it actually made sense, but when that connection hit her, she suddenly remembered all over again how Satsuki had mentioned that Ragyo had done something to her. That was when an unsettling possibility hit her like bricks, filling her with a sense of anger like none other. How she was even able to calm herself down she didn't know, but right now the last thing she wanted to do was scare Satsuki by questioning such a thing out of nowhere.

But would Ragyo really go that far-? Actually, shit question. She *would* . The bitch really had absolutely no limits she wouldn't cross, didn't she? *Goddammit.*

"You're wrong... If somebody truly loves you they won't care whether or not you have sex with them. I don't really care much about sex either and Mako is totally fine with that. So maybe you should talk it out with her and be completely honest about it. I'm sure she'd understand. And… Nee-san… You're not selfish… for not wanting that. Nobody has a right to make you feel like you don't have a choice about that sort of thing..."

"It wouldn't be the first time if something like that did *happen* , *"* Satsuki wanted to say, but kept the thought to herself.

"Perhaps, you are correct..." She uttered. And yet she was still uncertain about the concept of a relationship. She was barely okay with physical contact as it was.

So was it wrong then? Was it wrong that even now she still desired for Nonon to hold her hand and stay by her side like she always had? Honestly, she didn't know anymore.

"Course I am. Now come on, let's eat before our food gets cold. Giving you a pep talk like that kinda made me work up an appetite again." Ryuko blushed a bit, scratching her cheek as she gained a small smile from Satsuki.

…

Several hours later after eating their food, Ryuko found herself in the bedroom that Satsuki had offered her in the tour of her Manor, placing her bag on the dresser. It was nearing dusk, so the various shades of orange, purple, and yellow in the sky caught her eye from the window. The sight was beautiful.

She looked down at the key Satsuki gave her, a warmth enveloping her chest at the thought that Satsuki was really letting her share this place.

That happy feeling quickly dissipated, however, as she once again remembered Senketsu. Tears formed in her eyes and she clutched at the fabric of her shirt near her heart.

"I just wish… you were still here with me, Senketsu… I miss you so much…" She choked out.

Hearing the lack of a response hurt even more than it usually did for some reason.

She suddenly felt her legs weaken beneath her as she sunk to the floor, leaning her back against the bed for support. Silent sobs wracked her entire frame.

Something inside of her wished Mako were here right now to tell her that everything would be okay, to hug her, and yet nothing would ever be able to truly make up for Senketsu being gone.

Nothing in the world could take this pain away.

After what felt like an eternity, Ryuko felt Satsuki sit beside her on the floor.

Satsuki softly wrapped her arms around her, awkwardly offering comfort. "I am well aware than I cannot be there for you like Mako or Senketsu, but I figured you might at least want some company right now. If not, please just tell me and I will leave. I have no desire to overstep my bounds."

"It's fine… I don't want you to leave." Ryuko's voice was horse as she spoke, but her short response gave Satsuki all the answer she needed.

"I understand." Satsuki said, gently stroking the back of her head through her hair. "I will stay if that is what you want me to do."

Slowly, Ryuko found herself becoming relaxed in her embrace. It felt good. Only then did it really start to dawn her why the Elite Four and some of the others thought so highly of Satsuki.

Beneath the facade she had kept up for the Academy, she was genuinely a kind person. A part of her just wished that she'd seen it sooner.

Before she realized it, Ryuko had drifted off to sleep in her sister's arms.

Satsuki smiled softly as she looked down at her sleeping sister, who was leaning against her chest and lightly snoring. At first, she considered lifting her up and placing her on the bed, but she was afraid it might wake Ryuko up so in the end she decided to stay there with her. Ryuko had obviously been exhausted, so she needed as much sleep as she could get right now.

…

Hopefully I'll be back with more soon.

Chapter 8

When Ryuko woke back up she saw that it was light outside. Had she actually slept all the way through the night? She looked to her side at Satsuki, who had apparently fallen asleep as well.

"Nee-san? We should probably get off the floor. Hey, wake up." Ryuko called out. This time she knew better than to try to touch her when she wasn't even really conscious.

After a moment, Satsuki squinted, opening her eyes. She jumped a bit, before slowly coming to.

"Ryuko…? What time is it?" She murmured, a bit dazed.

"I dunno, I just woke up. It looks like we slept through the night." Ryuko told her.

"Ah… It seems that way, doesn't it?" Satsuki noted, looking out the window.

"Like I said, though, I think we should get off the floor." Ryuko said awkwardly.

"I know... just give me a minute to gather my thoughts, alright?" Satsuki still felt drained even if she had slept. No nightmare, though, so that was a positive. That, however, could fluctuate and change at any given time.

"Sure, whatever you say, Satsuki." Ryuko smirked a bit, and after that, she dismissed herself to go bathe in the bath house, leaving Satsuki behind.

...

Several hours later, Ryuko and Satsuki had both taken baths(separately of course). Ryuko was currently lounging on a couch, as she absentmindedly watched her sister traipsing around. Neither one of them had said much to the other for quite sometime now so Ryuko couldn't help herself from wandering back to their conversation from yesterday.

"...The dream I had... It was about Ragyo... Every time I saw that woman, she..."

For some reason Satsuki's words kept echoing in her head, making her grow more anxious by the second.

"Is sex not considered by most to be the basis of a relationship? If I said yes, I am almost certain she would expect that of me sooner or later and I have no desire for such a thing. ***It scares me."***

Her nightmare, the fear of physical contact...

Ragyo certainly wasn't beyond doing something like that, but could her suspicions really be right? Even with Ryuko herself, Ragyo had gotten far too handsy and close for comfort on a couple of occasions. Something about the whole memory, even about how she had kissed Nui under the influence of Junketsu sent a wave of nausea to her stomach, and for some reason she suddenly felt dirty at the thought of it.

There was no telling how Satsuki would react if questioned, but if it was really bothering her so much, then wasn't there some way to help her?

"You did not know Ragyo as well as I did. I grew up around her and witnessed all of her worst traits first hand for years."

Damn it .

Ryuko had quickly found herself at a complete loss of what to do right now, and yet

the thought that Satsuki might have been *molested for who knows how many years by their **mom*** just freaked her out.

The worst part about it was that it would explain *everything* .

The question once again began nagging at her, urging her to ask Satsuki about it, but in the end not a single word left her mouth.

At some point, somebody knocked on the door.

Satsuki opened it to see it was Nonon.

"Hey…" Nonon said a bit awkwardly.

"Nonon, why are you here?" Satsuki asked.

"Well, I was kind of worried about Satsuki-chan after what happened the other day, so I wanted to come check up on you. How are you feeling?"

"I am fine, but I must apologize for cutting our meetup short, as well as for what I said to you. It was rude of me." Satsuki said, blushing a bit as Nonon took her hand into her own.

"No, don't say that, Even if you don't feel the same way, I'm okay with just being friends. As long as you're happy, that's all I care about..." Nonon assured her, having no clue that Satsuki actually *did* return her feelings. That, of course, wasn't something Satsuki could bring herself to tell Nonon.

"Hey, bitch." Ryuko smirked, catching her attention.

"Huh?" Nonon scoffed, not that thrilled to see her. ″Oh, great, it's *her*. *Why're you* here?"

"Well, we are sisters, so I thought I'd spend a few nights with her." Ryuko said. "Why? You don't have a problem with me staying with my *family* , do you?"

"Right, I forgot." Nonon said sarcastically, momentarily looking away.

She then gazed down at Satsuki's hand, noticing the bandage wrapped around it. It did catch her off guard a bit, but she decided to not question it, not thinking it was that big with the view that she saw. "So um… anyway... I was thinking maybe we could… go out again? Not like a date or anything, just…"

"Yes. I would love that." Satsuki already knew what she meant. "You do not have an issue with Ryuko coming along, do you...?"

"Nah. I'll tolerate her, but only for *you* , Satsuki-sama." Nonon smirked before sticking her tongue out at Ryuko, who sent a death glare back at her.

"Oh, I'm *sorry* , you wanna start something?" Ryuko sneered, daring Nonon to challenge her.

"Who knows? Maybe." Nonon teased.

"Alright then, but don't complain when I beat your ass into the ground. Oh, wait, that's right, without your Goku uniform I bet you can't even *touch* me, with how *small* and short you are." Ryuko snorted.

Nonon's height was a secret sore spot for Nonon, rage consumed her but before she could say anything in response, Satsuki cut her off.

"Both of you two, that is enough. It would be wise not to provoke each other while we're in town, so behave yourselves." She said, as she gently placed a hand on Nonon's head,

receiving a small blush from her.

"Tch. Yeah, yeah. I gotcha." Ryuko grumbled in response.

"And Nonon, try not to let her comment bother you too much, okay? I think you are perfectly fine the way you are." Satsuki smiled.

Nonon looked up at her, her face turning a bit red. A part of her still felt insecure.

"You really mean that…?" She asked in a low voice.

"Yes." Without thinking and caught up in the mood, Satsuki softly brushed a hand across Nonon's cheek to offer reassurance. It took a moment before she even realized what she was doing, and immediately heat flushed her face in response to her own actions. By the time she could retract her hand, however, Ryuko and Nonon had already noticed it, and Ryuko had no intentions of letting it go.

"Nee-san, are you *blushing?"* Ryuko smirked, causing Satsuki's face to go even brighter.

"A-and so what if I am..? What is your point?" Satsuki weakly murmured, stumbling over her words in the process, immediately turning away to hide her face. All she had done was touch Nonon's cheek, why was she getting like this?!

Drawing in a deep breath she somehow managed to calm herself down, cursing her fast heartbeat.

Ryuko opened her mouth to speak up but Nonon beat her to it.

"Satsuki-chan-" Nonon started to inquire, confused by her actions. Did Satsuki… like her too? If so, why would she reject her? *No* , it had to be her imagination. There was no way Satsuki would like her like that. She'd made it perfectly clear she wasn't interested.

Satsuki couldn't even face her. "Let us go. We must not waste anymore time than we already have."

After that, the subject was dropped at least for a while.

…

Once they were in town, Nonon had started going on about college and some exams she was gonna be taking with Satsuki tentatively listening and making occasional comments here and there.

"Hey, Satsuki-chan, I have an idea. Let's go do some Karaoke together! I guess she can join too if she wants." Nonon suddenly suggested.

"Ryuko?" Satsuki inquired her thoughts on the matter.

"Uh, yeah. I mean I'm pretty much okay with whatever you guys wanna do." Ryuko said casually, not caring one way or the other. "I probably won't sing myself but that doesn't mean I couldn't watch, right?"

"Great!" Nonon excitedly began pulling Satsuki by her hand to follow her. "Come on, Satsuki-chan!"

Satsuki blushed a bit in surprise, before smiling softly at the back of the shorter girl in front of her, allowing herself to be dragged along wherever Nonon wanted.

…

Until a couple days ago it had never truly dawned on Ryuko that Satsuki was still just a teenager, but as she observed her and Nonon while they were singing together, Ryuko found herself grinning.

For the first time in who knew how long, Satsuki genuinely looked happy. Even if she seemed a bit awkward, she was clearly enjoying herself regardless and it was downright hilarious to see *her* , who was usually calm and composed, reduced to a blushing mess far more than once in front of the girl she liked.

Ryuko didn't know many of the details of their past together, but she could tell just by watching them as they were now, that if there was anybody who could truly get Satsuki to open up, it was Nonon.

Satsuki meanwhile was quickly finding herself drawn into the world of music. She fortunately knew most of the songs because they were ones she had heard Nonon play around her on multiple occasions.

She wasn't used to singing much at all, so a part of her truthfully felt a bit insecure, but as long as Nonon was by her side, it was fine.

This was fun.

As time passed them by, Satsuki had found herself smiling more and more, having completely forgotten about her surroundings and current stresses even if only for a while.

Occasionally, she stopped, allowing Nonon to solo. Just watching and hearing her sing, it was relaxing. Even in the past, Nonon would often sing for Satsuki at times when she was depressed or not quite herself. To Satsuki, Nonon's voice was beautiful, it always had been.

Suddenly, her face flushed red when she realized where her thoughts were going. Nonon looked at her inquisitively, hoping she would join back in again.

Satsuki gladly did so, trying to push back the thoughts she was just having again.

…

Later on, Nonon urged Satsuki along with her to several different stores in the area, Ryuko following behind without saying much.

"Ryuko, would you like to pick out some clothing?" Satsuki tried to catch her attention. She could tell that Ryuko was starting to pull away somewhat. Maybe keeping her mind off of Senketsu would help somewhat. "Some of these look like things you would wear. I do not mind paying."

"Oh, uh, sure, but are you really okay with that? It's not like I'm gonna have the money to pay you back or anything." Ryuko said with uncertainty.

"Please, it is fine. I could buy out this entire store if I so desired it." Satsuki smirked.

"Heh. You got a point there." Ryuko laughed a bit, before deciding it couldn't hurt to get some new clothes, she had so little as it was. In the end, she also got a black hoodie. As promised, Satsuki covered the cost of everything.

Even though Satsuki kept insisting on involving her, the truth was Ryuko didn't mind being a third wheel since she wasn't much for interacting with other people to begin with. She was just glad to see that her sister was happy for a change.

Unfortunately, the negative thoughts eventually began bugging her again. She couldn't help but wish Senketsu were there with her to talk to.

The crowds suddenly became overwhelming, and her head was spinning. The memory of the flames clouded her vision, making it hard to breathe.

"I'm kind of hungry, do you wanna go get something to eat?" Nonon asked Satsuki.

"That would be..." Satsuki said, trailing off into silence when she suddenly saw the look on Ryuko's face beside her. She placed a hand on her shoulder. "Ryuko…"

"I miss him, Nee-san." Ryuko murmured quietly, tears in her eyes.

"I know…" Satsuki said, her chest aching for her sister as she softly wrapped her arms around her, hoping it was the right thing to do. She looked up at Nonon. "I think we should go somewhere quieter, if that would not a problem."

"Yeah, sure, I don't mind." Nonon smiled, softly. "There's actually an Italian restaurant a couple blocks down, so we can go by there. It's better than nothing and it's not as noisy as many other places."

"That sounds wonderful. Come on, Ryuko." Satsuki let go before gently pressed a hand to her back. She encouraged her to follow them.

Ryuko wordlessly did as asked.

…

When they arrived at the restaurant Nonon decided to order some Lasagna and Rissoto, as well as a tea.

Satsuki meanwhile stuck with a simple antipasto platter and decided on tea as well.

Looking at Ryuko now, Satsuki figured she wouldn't want anything and using force over something like this was not option. Still, she would feel bad if she didn't at least try to get her to eat *something* .

"Ryuko, I know you are probably not hungry right now, but I still want you to try to eat a few bites of something. How does Pizza sound? Or if there's something else you want instead, just tell me."

"...I guess. Pizza is fine…" Ryuko said in a voice barely above a whisper.

"What do you want to drink?" Satsuki asked.

"...Maybe a Lemonade?" Ryuko asked in a low voice.

"Alright. When the waiter arrives, we can ask for that." Satsuki smiled.

...

Once they had their stuff ordered, the waiter brought them their food after asking what kind of toppings Ryuko wanted on her Pizza. Nonon hadn't said much of anything out of consideration for Satsuki and Ryuko right now. She wasn't all that close to Ryuko, but down deep she still sorta considered her a friend and didn't like seeing her in so much emotional distress.

Ryuko stared at the plate offered to her, feeling nauseous at the thought of eating anything.

"Ryuko… just a few bites. *Please*... " Satsuki wasn't usually the type to plea, but she would do anything she had to to see to it that her sister took care of herself. Ryuko had lost a lot of weight as of late, and Satsuki herself had felt it last night when Ryuko fell asleep on her but didn't say anything.

Could a life fiber hybrid like Ryuko die from starvation? It was not a question she had ever considered before, but quite frankly Satsuki didn't want to found out the answer to it. All she

knew was that Ryuko was neglecting her own health and she needed somebody to encourage her to look after herself right now.

Even if Ryuko *couldn't* die from something like that, which was very plausible, it didn't make Satsuki feel any better about it, nor did it reduce her concern for her sister.

Unfortunately, much to Satsuki's frustration yet expectancy, Ryuko remained stubborn as she always had been, refusing to eat a single bite.

Satsuki sighed. "Ryuko… If you really do not want to eat anything, then I cannot force you, but will you at least tell me why? I am well aware it has to do with Senketsu, but I wish to understand further so that I may help and perhaps talk it out with you. Is that… not what sisters are supposed to do for each other...?"

As she said that, she felt out of place, looking down awkwardly. Being in the position of an older sister was still new for her, she never knew how Ryuko would respond, whether she would accept her help or resent her for it.

Ryuko gazed up over at her and felt a warmth enter her chest. Satsuki was genuinely trying to reach out to her; to take initiative as an older sister she never had the chance to be before.

How did she only truly realize that now?

After a moment, Ryuko averted her gaze, clutching at the fabric of her shirt.

"...It just… feels wrong to me… Without him here… It's like... I don't *deserve* to eat or something… It keeps making me sick. I… I should have been stronger…"

"I know that you are in pain right now, and you are trying to find a way to blame yourself for what happened to rationalize it... In your mind, it probably even feels like finding what you 'did wrong' will make everything okay somehow. But no matter what you may think, it was

not your fault… So it hurts me to see you putting yourself through this. Senketsu cared deeply for you and he would not want you to starve yourself for his sake."

"Yeah, I know that…!" Ryuko snapped, growing more frustrated by the second. "But I can't stop myself from feeling this way…! I just..."

Tears glistened in her eyes.

"He was right there… and then he was *gone* ." Ryuko clutched at the fabric of her shirt, her voice cracking.

"I am well aware of what you must be feeling." Satsuki calmly spoke, softly brushing a hand through her hair to offer comfort as she pulled her into an embrace. "And it will take time. I do not expect you stop feeling sad and nor am I asking you to move on, but please... at least try to let the hate you have for yourself go. You do not deserve to suffer like this. You did everything you could have."

"Nee-san…" Ryuko stifled a sob. "Thanks…"

Much to Satsuki's relief, Ryuko returned the hug.

"Do not mention it." Satsuki said with a painfilled smile, allowing Ryuko to pull away after a moment. Ryuko then leaned over the table burying her head in her arms.

Satsuki immediately grew disheartened at that, feeling insecure in her title as an older sister and questioning what it was that she was doing wrong. None of her efforts or words had been good enough to encourage Ryuko to take care of herself. Even yesterday, she had only done it out of guilt and obligation. Mako's family had *trusted* her with Ryuko and yet she-

Upon looking down at the food she had left on her plate, she suddenly lost her own appetite and that was when she felt a hand on hers, cutting off her thoughts. It was Nonon. She was

looking at her with worried eyes as if trying to offer some comfort. Satsuki sheepishly returned the gesture.

Nonon glanced over at Ryuko, before deciding to speak up, gazing away nervously. "Do you two… Wanna go back home? I kind of feel like I might be in the way right now."

Satsuki didn't know how to respond at first. On one hand, staying out much longer probably wasn't good for Ryuko, but she still didn't want Nonon to leave her side right now, because the truth was she had had fun today. She had always liked spending time with her, even back when they were kids. So the idea of having to cut that short again hurt more than she had expected it would.

"Perhaps it would be best if we returned to my place, so that Ryuko may get some rest. Even so… Can you…" Satsuki felt her face heat up a bit. "stay with me, Nonon? If not, I will understand..."

"You mean like *stay the night* ?" Nonon was a bit surprised. "Sure, I don't mind. But we used to do that all the time, so there's no need for Satsuki-chan to be embarrassed about it. What's gotten into you?"

She laughed, finding it a bit cute.

"It is nothing… I just…" Satsuki tried to say, but she felt more awkward by the second, unable to to finish her sentence in the end.

"Well, whatever the reason, I'm okay with it, but I'll have to get some of my stuff first, alright?" Nonon told her.

Satsuki nodded, smiling a bit. "Of course."

She then reached over, gently placing a hand on Ryuko's shoulder. "Ryuko, let us go home."

"Oh, yeah, sure." Ryuko slowly stood up after a moment. However, as she did, a wave of dizziness suddenly hit her and she almost fell. "Shit…!"

"Ryuko...! Are you okay? What happened?" Satsuki caught her, immediately concerned.

"'s nothin." Ryuko murmured, placing a hand on Satsuki's shoulder to balance herself. She recovered within seconds. "I just got dizzy for a second there. I'm fine now, though, so don't worry about it."

"Are you sure? You look pale." Satsuki asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just drop it." Ryuko said curtly, shutting down her concerns. She didn't want to talk about it, already having an idea what it had been caused by.

Satsuki sighed, knowing the conversation was already over at that point.

…

A/N: Finally another chapter is out. I hope somebody enjoyed this. We're finally getting more into the SatsuNon side of this but that's gonna be a slow go because even though Satsuki's feelings are obviously there, and even though her and Nonon have known each other for years, a huge part of her is still uncertain about the whole thing.

Chapter 9

As a heads up, this chapter might have a couple inspirations from my SatsuNon side comic "No Covers" which primarily handles the Satsuki's trauma from Ragyo's sexual abuse(inspirations like the tea thing which is basically the same). You can find it in my recently posted stories, if you haven't checked it out yet.

...

When Satsuki and Ryuko returned to Satsuki's place, Ryuko almost immediately went to her room to sleep, leaving Satsuki to once again question what good she had even done for her sister. Part of Satsuki questioned if she she had made everything worse for alone.

Satsuki sighed, deciding it was best to let Ryuko rest even though her insecurities about not being able to do more gnawed at her.

A couple hours later, Nonon returned, greeting her by holding her hand again as she questioned where Ryuko had went.

"She is currently resting in her room. She went straight to bed when we arrived." Satsuki explained.

"Oh, I see… Sorry I couldn't offer much advice earlier… I was afraid I'd just end up upsetting both of you if I said much of anything." Nonon apologized, a bit insecurely.

"Do not trouble yourself. It is fine." Satsuki smiled a bit as Nonon sat down on the couch. "In any case, I am just glad you could stay over."

"Well, I've always loved spending nights with Satsuki-chan, but you kind of surprised me when you asked me to all of a sudden." Nonon said, feeling a bit of a blush on her face, when Satsuki sat down next to her. "Is there a reason you wanted me to stay with you or is it just..."

Satsuki averted her gaze, unable to stop the heat from rising to her cheeks. "I didn't want to cut our time short again. The truth is I…"

She trailed off into silence, feeling more uncertain and insecure than ever. It wasn't even confessing her feelings that was hard for her. She loved Nonon, she truly did, but the fear of what would be expected of her in a relationship was just too great. She couldn't risk it.

"I am sorry, Nonon. Having you stay the night was selfish of me." Satsuki murmured, sheepishly.

"No, it wasn't selfish at all… If there's something you want to tell me, then just say it." Nonon insisted.

"I just…" At feeling Nonon's soft hand on hers, Satsuki's heart ached. The truth was, she wanted this… more than anything, to be able to embrace her and call her hers, even to be able to kiss her. And yet, the prospect of it just felt all wrong. It terrified her.

Disgusting .

A voice in the back of her head reminded her all over again she wasn't clean. She had been tainted and violated. Everything about her was *dirty* .

She didn't deserve this. Nonon deserved far better. What was she even *thinking* ?

Tears welled up in her eyes as she looked away. "No, it is nothing… Forget I said anything..."

Satsuki began to head out towards the door way before Nonon could even speak.

"Please excuse me as I go to prepare our room." Satsuki dismissed herself, leaving Nonon behind to wonder what could be bothering her so much. Satsuki rarely ever got like this and when she did, it was always over something pretty big.

In the end, Nonon decided not to push the matter, waiting until Satsuki was finished with whatever she needed to do. When Satsuki called her into her bedroom, Nonon picked up her bag bringing it with her.

Upon entering the room and seeing Satsuki had changed into a long sleeved nightgown, Nonon felt a light blush tinge her cheeks.

Due to the fact that Ragyo and Nonon's father had worked together transporting clothes through REVOCS with Nonon's father being the CEO of Jakuzure Transportations, Nonon had often spent nights with Satsuki from an early age, sleeping in the same bed with her and everything. And back then, when they were kids they had never thought anything of it. Even as they got older, it had always been the norm for them.

But now that Nonon's feelings were out in the open, it suddenly couldn't get any more awkward for either one of them. Satsuki herself was finding it hard to contain herself, wondering deep down if maybe this was a mistake after all.

"Erm… Feel free to place your bag anywhere you'd like, alright? I think I will go check up on Ryuko in the meantime." Satsuki murmured awkwardly, hiding a small blush of her own as she passed by Nonon to head out into the hallway.

Ryuko was staring at the ceiling when Satsuki reached her room.

"How are you feeling?" Satsuki dared to ask.

"'m fine now. Sorry… about earlier. I ruined your date."Ryuko muttered, barely above a whisper.

Satsuki felt a pang of hurt when hearing her say that.

"It is fine, really. All things considered, I had a lot of fun today. I just feel bad that you did not." Satsuki said regretfully, not even realizing she had failed to deny it was a date.

"Nah, seeing you turning into a tomato around her was more than enough fun for me. I just… started thinking of Senketsu again and I completely lost it… I don't... know if I should be here… I feel like I'm making everything worse for everybody around me. Not just you, but Mako and all the others as well. Maybe I should go away somewhere or..." Ryuko clutched at her chest where her life fiber heart was.

Satsuki didn't even have a chance to be embarrassed at the mention of her blushing because worry for Ryuko immediately consumed her, knowing exactly what she was alluding to. "You're wrong... You are one of the only reasons I keep fighting, Ryuko. If something were to happen to you… I don't think I would be able to forgive myself."

Satsuki looked down in frustration, as she received a look of surprise from Ryuko.

The younger sister smiled softly. "...You really care that much about me, huh? Funny considering just a few months ago we were fighting. Shit, feels like just yesterday."

"The way I treated you back then… and the things I did..." Satsuki said, her voice heavy. "It haunts me every day… I should have been honest with you from the start and reached out to you as an ally. Instead, I tried to use you like a pawn and hurt you. After I realized you were my sister, I…"

Without even realizing it, tears had welled up in her eyes. She was desperate and fearful that Ryuko might try to take her own life. She couldn't lose her, not like that. "I am aware I probably do not have a right to speak on this matter. After all, you would not be wrong to hate me if you wanted to… but taking your life… that is the one thing I will not allow."

"Satsuki-" Ryuko started to speak up but was pulled into an embrace as Satsuki sat next to her on the bed.

"As your older sister, I am asking you to *live* , Ryuko." Satsuki choked out, her shoulders trembling. "Please... I couldn't bare to lose you."

Slowly, somewhat shocked by her honesty and display of affection, Ryuko reached up to return the hug. "I won't die… I promise. I just... need some time to clear my head right now…"

"I see… I understand." Satsuki pulled away, wiping her tears. "I suppose I'll leave you alone for now…"

"Yeah, besides, I'm sure your girlfriend is getting lonely without you by her side." Ryuko smirked, caused Satsuki's cheeks to flush red.

"Ryuko-"

"Come on, Nee-san, it's obvious you like her, so just tell her already." Ryuko already knew what she was gonna say.

"If it were that simple, I would have done so already." Satsuki averted her gaze, clutching at her arm.

"...Look… I think I get what you're afraid of… It... has to do with Ragyo, doesn't it…? What she did to you… It wasn't just abuse… She…. *touched* you." Ryuko dared to assume after a long moment of hesitation. Part of her knew it might be a bad idea to bring it up again, but Satsuki needed to know that relationships weren't inherently a bad thing, they didn't even *have* to be sexual.

More importantly, she needed to understand That Nonon wasn't the type of person that would try to take advantage of her, and she needed to know that she wasn't alone. From the little bit of time she had known Satsuki, she already knew that Satsuki herself would never broach such a subject unless she was directly asked about it, it was probably too humiliating.

Besides, many sexual abuse victims would hold things like that in until they eventually snapped.

At the very mention of it, tears formed in the corners of Satsuki's eyes as she looked away in shame. For a long time, she couldn't even speak. Bangs shadowed her eyes as she looked down, resisting the urge to tear her arm to pieces right then and there..

"It was..." Satsuki uttered, unmistakable fear in her voice, unable to even finish her sentence.

"Hey, it's okay, you don't have to talk about it if you don't want to. But… not everybody is like that, you know? There are a lot of good people out there too, and Jakuzure is one of them." Ryuko said. "She's not the type of person that would do something to risk breaking your trust. She cares about you, a lot. Even I can see that. It's alright if you decide not to, I just don't want you to hold yourself back from being happy with her if it's something you want.. get what I'm sayin?"

"...Yes… Thank you, Ryuko…" Satsuki forced herself to say despite her inner turmoil.

Ryuko *knew* about the things Ragyo did to her now; that she had *let herself be violated* . Satsuki had already subconsciously convinced herself that Ryuko thought she was weak, just as she thought of herself that way, even if it couldn't be further from the truth.

So looking her in the eye now was impossible. It brought her nothing but shame and humiliation. Despite that, she felt giving some kind of response was the best option.

"I do not know if I would be capable of keeping a relationship, but... perhaps I could try once I have given it some thought…"

…

It really shouldn't have been a surprise when Satsuki found herself in the bathtub later that day again with even more lacerations on her arms than before, the once clear water beneath

her dyed dark red and old cuts reopened.

Ryuko *knew* .

That was all she could think as nausea wholly consumed her.

She hadn't wanted anybody to ever find out about the things Ragyo had done to her. It sickened her, but also scared her. What if she told Nonon?

They would all know just how *filthy* she was.

Ragyo's hands traversed up and down her body, reminding her all over again of her weakness and vulnerability. She dropped the razor, clawing at her mutilated arm, upset that nothing was working to calm her nerves. Tears spilled from her eyes, wishing Ragyo's voice telling her that this was her nature would just shut up.

Lightheadedness and exhaustion suddenly began to set in, warning her that if she lost any more blood she would pass out.

Damn it…!

She cursed internally, reluctantly acknowledging that she needed to stop.

...

When Satsuki returned to the bedroom, Nonon had already fallen asleep, sprawled out over the bed. Satsuki smiled tenderly as she picked her up bridal style to move her over. Nonon was lightweight so it an easy feat to accomplish.

Picking up the near by blanket, she spread it over her, before lying down next to the smaller girl and sharing the covers.

Looking at the peaceful expression on Nonon's sleeping face, Satsuki felt her heart flutter a bit. Unable to resist the urge, she reached up and cleared some lose strands of hair out from in front of her eyes, briefly caressing her cheek and allowing herself to take in the softness of her skin.

Within minutes she caught herself in the act *again* . What was she *doing* ?

She cursed her wandering hand, pulling away in frustration as she remembered all the times Ragyo had touched her. It didn't take her long to convince herself that she was becoming no better than *her* . It was wrong of her to have these feelings, it was wrong to want to embrace her; to want to kiss her and call her hers. Such thoughts were impure.

And yet she couldn't stop them. She *loved* Nonon more than she could even understand.

"Satsuki-chan…? What's wrong? Why are you crying?" A soft hand on her face interrupted her thoughts, wiping away tears which she had barely processed were falling. Blue eyes met worried pink ones.

"Sorry, Nonon. I didn't mean to wake you…" Satsuki said, feeling guilty for getting her worried.

"No, it's fine. But if there's something bothering you, you can trust me. You know that, right?" Nonon encouraged her to talk.

Satsuki gently took her hand into her own, even more tears spilling out than before.

"I am fine. You needn't worry about me." she intertwined their fingers without even thinking about it. "Let us get some rest, alright?"

Nonon could tell she wasn't okay, and pretended not to notice the bandages peeking out from her sleeves. Instead of asking about it she curled up closer to her.

"Can you hold me?" She blushed a bit. "Like Satsuki-chan used to..."

Satsuki's face flushed a bit in response at the reference to their childhood years before smiling and doing as asked.

"Of course…" She wrapped her arm around Nonon, pulling her closer. Nonon rested her head against Satsuki's chest, taking in her scent and slowly drifting back off to sleep.

Satsuki melted in her warmth, barely resisting the urge to kiss her on the top of the head. Being like this with her, holding her in her arms… it felt right - wonderful even.

Reaching up, despite the voice in the back of her head telling her it was wrong of her to want this, she couldn't stop herself from combing a few fingers through Nonon's hair which for once was down and loosely hanging over her shoulders instead of tied up in a hat. Nonon's relaxed expression, barely visible in the dim light, completely captured Satsuki's heart. She was gorgeous.

Her embarrassing last thought got cut short when she heard light footsteps in the doorway.

She looked behind her to see it was Ryuko, who was holding a pillow and a blanket.

"Ryuko? What is it?" Satsuki whispered, secretly grateful for the distraction.

"I… I started thinking about Senketsu again and I didn't want to be alone right now, but it's fine, whatever. I'll just go back to my room if you don't want me here." Ryuko said sheepishly.

The truth was Ryuko had gotten so used to sleeping next to Mako and with other people that sleeping alone at night wasn't comfortable to her at all.

"No, it's alright." Satsuki said, feeling guilty at the idea of pushing her sister away when she needed her. "Come here."

"You mean you're really okay with it?" Ryuko asked uncertainly, not failing to notice how close Satsuki was holding Nonon.

"Yes." Satsuki nodded. "Just make sure you keep your voice down so you don't wake up Nonon."

"Alright." Ryuko hesitantly moved into the bed behind her, facing her back towards her.

Satsuki felt a bit claustrophobic now that she was sandwiched in between them, but knowing this was what Ryuko needed right now made it easier to deal with and put her mind more at ease.

Ryuko clearly didn't want to be alone, and Satsuki didn't have the heart to turn her away.

Besides, remembering Nonon was here with her well allowed her to rid herself of any initial uneasiness she had felt about it. Before she realized it, she found herself drifting off to sleep.

…

Unfortunately Satsuki's nightmares that night were back in full force, causing her to wake up the next morning, gasping for air all over again. Accidentally waking up Nonon and Ryuko in the process, she stumbled to the bathroom to throw up all over again.

Nonon and Ryuko had followed behind out of concern.

"Satsuki-chan-" Nonon started to speak, reaching out to touch her shoulder out of concern.

"Do not touch me!" Satsuki instinctively pulled away, curling in on herself and not even really processing who it was. Her lungs suddenly constricted, and she could hardly breathe, her vision becoming foggy.

The hands. *Her* hands. They were touching her *again* . Ragyo, she-

Another wave of nausea hit her like bricks, causing her to vomit nothing but stomach bile, burning her throat in the process.

Tears fell from her eyes after that and all she could do was break down into choked sobs.

Nonon and Ryuko watched helplessly as Satsuki completely fell to pieces. It was only then that Ryuko happened to notice both bandages on Satsuki's arm. Last she knew, Satsuki only had one, so when did she get a new injury? More importantly *how* ?

Shit, that wasn't important right now.

"Satsuki, hey... Ragyo's not here anymore. You're safe now. You just gotta calm down and talk to us, alright?" Ryuko tried to console her, despite her insecurities. She wasn't used to being in such a position, but if it got Satsuki to calm down then she didn't have a choice and would push past everything fiber of pride in her entire being if only to see her normal again. Slowly she started reminding Satsuki to take slow breaths, following Barazo's example. Eventually, after what felt like forever, it worked.

Satsuki was no longer panicking but she looked drained, barely speaking just like the other morning.

"I'm sorry..." She murmured beneath her recently recovered breath.

"No, don't say sorry, you were scared and that's okay." Nonon said softly; understandingly, as she held onto Satsuki's hand. "I'm just glad you're alright now… Listen, I'll go make some tea for you to drink, alright? You always liked that."

Satsuki didn't respond, feeling guilt and frustration for putting them through all this trouble over a disgusting mental breakdown. Why did they keep having to see her like this? All she was doing was making everything worse for everybody around her. Even Nonon this time. What made matters even worse was that this was completely counterproductive to Ryuko's own recovery.

After a moment of getting no response, Nonon sighed painfully before clearing her thoughts and heading to the kitchen. Based off Ryuko's mention of Ragyo, this wasn't the first time Satsuki had gotten like that. Despite her desire to question it, however, she decided it would have to wait. Satsuki still needed more time to calm down.

Ryuko stayed behind with Satsuki, who hadn't budged an inch. Briefly she wondered if she should ask about the bandages on her arms again or not. Something deep in her gut told her she should, but Satsuki clearly wasn't in any state of mind to discuss it so the priority was letting her calm down.

"Nee-san, I think you should get off the floor… Come here." Hesitantly she took her by the hand, attempting to pull her up. Satsuki refused to budge.

"No, if you wouldn't mind, I need to get changed." Satsuki mumbled.

"Oh, yeah, right. Well... Just call for me if you need something, Nee-san." Ryuko said, as she got up, a bit disparaged when Satsuki said nothing. She looked detached.

Ryuko sighed, but left her alone, heading after Nonon, who was currently sifting through some dishes in the cabinet. However, before she could reach her destination, the phone rang.

Her first thought was that it might be Mako.

"Hello?"

"Oh, Ryuko-chan, it's you. Is Satsuki-chan with you?"

Surprisingly enough, it was Sukuyo.

"Oba-san, I thought Mako had called for a second. And Nee-san is in the bathroom right now… Why do you ask?

Nonon had heard the phone and came out of the kitchen to pick it up. At hearing Satsuki mentioned, her interest was immediately peaked.

"Well… Erm… How should I put this… You know the bandages she has on her arm?"

"Yeah apparently she has another one now. I didn't know until a short while ago. I tried asking her about the first one the other day and she told me it was from some fight, but the way she acted about it didn't sit well with me. She was really evasive about giving me many details. But now that both of her arms are bandages, I don't think that's it. There's nothing she could have done that..." Ryuko trailed off into silence to question if maybe she had missed something. She admittedly hadn't been with her 24/7, after all.

"This is gonna be hard to process, so I need you to stay calm. Both my husband and I believe the wounds her arm could be self-harm related. I spoke to Satsuki-chan for a few minutes before you two left and her response about it furthers my suspicion. Also… Mako… she found one of her razors broken in the bathroom earlier. One of the blades had been torn out by force. That sort of thing... it doesn't happen on accident."

Self-harm? You've gotta be joking.

At hearing that, tears welled up in Nonon's eyes.

"Hey wait, Jakuzure…!" Ryuko started to say but Nonon had already stormed off to the bathroom. " *Shit… Thanks for telling me about this, Oba-san. I'll talk to you later, okay?* "

"Hold on a second before you go, Ryuko-chan."

"What is it?" Ryuko asked at hearing her name.

"If what we think is right… that sort of habit… it doesn't go away by itself. Barazo and I were talking and we think it would be best if she stayed somewhere where a doctor could keep an eye on her. Like either a hospital, or she could stay with us if she's willing to..."

"I got it. We'll figure something out, alright? I doubt Satsuki would want to want to be in a hospital right now, anyways, so staying with you guys would probably be the best option. Anyway, I'll call back to let you know what she decides." Ryuko smiled a bit before before hanging up, and running after Nonon.

…

Satsuki had just finished getting dressed when Nonon approached her, tears in her eyes.

Satsuki didn't even have time to process it before Nonon reached out and tightly grabbed her hand.

"What are you doing, Nonon? Let go." Satsuki attempted to pull away in response. Unfortunately for her, it was too late.

"I'm sorry, Satsuki-chan, but I need to see your arm." Nonon hadn't even hesitated to pull back her sleeve and bandages, revealing the irreparable damage that had been done to her arm.

Nonon gasped in disbelief at the sight.

So many angry gashes and cuts. Her beautiful skin… *destroyed* …

"So she was right, after all. *Shit* ..." She choked out a sob, before hugging her. " *Why*... ?"

Satsuki felt her heart tear to pieces at seeing the girl she loved crying because of her. It hurt more than she could bear.

She looked down, hair falling in her face, her expression filled with guilt at having been found out. Ryuko showed up at that same moment to see the lacerations on her arm, but neither one of them payed her much mind.

"...I'm sorry… Nonon." Satsuki struggled to speak, tears in her own eyes. She had never once felt worse in her life than being the one to blame for making Nonon cry. She hesitantly stroked her on the head. "I didn't want to concern you. It was my problem to deal with so I saw no reason to involve anybody else is all. Just a trivial matter and nothing more."

"Like *hell* it is." Ryuko retorted, a bit harsher than intended. "You've literally torn your arms to pieces, Satsuki. That's not just a trivial matter! Why would you do something like that...?"

"It is none of your concern… I just…" Satsuki couldn't even say it.

Suddenly, the realization dawned on Ryuko. "Does it... have to do with Ragyo as well?"

At the single mention of Ragyo's name, Satsuki jerked a bit, before becoming noticeably tenser. Nonon looked up at her to see her reaction.

"...Perhaps, among many other things, but as I have said before, it doesn't matter…" Satsuki muttered, avoiding eye contact.

"How can you even say that…?" Nonon cried out, her voice cracking. "How many times do I have to tell you that you can trust me…? If you were feeling this way, you could have come and talked to me…. You know… that you're not alone, right…?" Nonon knew she probably hadn't handled this well at all, but she didn't care. She couldn't stop crying.

"Nonon-" Satsuki opened her mouth to speak but before she could continue, Nonon reached out and hugged her. Satsuki froze at first in response, startled by the gesture but almost immediately found herself relaxed enough to return it, melting into her embrace and warmth. If only a little, the pain in her heart began to ease. Unfortunately, it soon began to increase again tenfold with the guilt she was feeling for hurting Nonon so badly.

As she watched Nonon sobbing against Satsuki, Ryuko was immediately reminded of Mako. Even though they were different in many ways, Nonon loved Satsuki more than anything. It was so obvious it was almost painful to watch. She was afraid of losing her, and didn't know how else to handle what she was feeling. Ryuko herself wasn't any happier about the whole situation but somehow she had managed to stay calm on the overall.

"Look, you two… Why don't we go and sit down somewhere?" She suggested. "We can talk about this there."

"Ah…" Satsuki uttered, suddenly feeling small and without much say so in the matter.

"Yeah, let's go to the kitchen, okay? I'll finish up your tea so that way you can relax a bit first." Nonon wiped her eyes, sniffling a bit, before softly pulling Satsuki by her hand towards the kitchen.

…

"This tea is delicious. I appreciate you making it for me." Satsuki hummed in delight as she took a sip from the cup Nonon had given her. She was sitting at the table next to Ryuko.

Nonon had made a decent batch so there was enough for her and Ryuko as well which she offered. If under a different situation Ryuko might have found a way to tease Nonon about it but she didn't have the heart to.

Nonon blushed at the compliment Satsuki gave her. She wasn't an expert on making tea so she was happy it was so well received.

"It's no problem. I'm glad you like it. I wanted to do something to help you feel better, and I knew you liked tea, so I…" Nonon trailed off into silence, a bit nervous.

Satsuki knew what she wanted to say, stroking her on the head as she gave a pain filled smile. "Yes… this really means a lot to me… Thank you, Nonon…"

Truthfully, she couldn't help but feel her self loathing having increased tenfold and both Ryuko and Nonon could see it in her eyes, just how much she was struggling to keep up appearances even after her injuries had been discovered.

Slowly Satsuki finished her tea.

"Satsuki-chan…?" Nonon murmured, catching Satsuki's attention.

"Hm?"

"I'm sorry… about earlier... I shouldn't have gotten so upset with you. it just… really scared me… seeing all those injuries on your arms… I don't want to lose you…" Nonon looked down at her hands, fidgeting a bit.

"It's alright," Satsuki said, with a small painful smile. "I know what you were trying to say, but... I need this… I am well aware it's not healthy, but it is the only thing that helps. I can't just stop..."

Ryuko and Nonon grew disparaged at hearing that, an uncomfortable silence settling between them.

"Listen… Nee-san… About the stuff with Ragyo… What she did to you..." Ryuko finally decided to take initiative, sick of the silence. "I won't force you to talk about something you're not comfortable with, but I really think you should tell her about it."

Perhaps that was part of the reason Ryuko was calmer than Nonon about this, she more or less had an idea of why Satsuki had been cutting herself. All of this had been thrown on Nonon, meanwhile, without a single moment to truly process it.

Nonon looked towards Ryuko at the mention and then at Satsuki.

"I will not. She does not need to know about that. *Nobody* does." Satsuki replied stubbornly, making her stance clear. Her voiced cracked at the end of her sentence.

Ryuko became frustrated at her response, but understood. The choice to come out to Nonon about something like that - That choice should be Satsuki's and nobody else's. After all, that choice might be the only thing that *hadn't* been stolen from her.

"What are you talking about? What is it that Ragyo did to you…?" Nonon asked in concern, taking her hand into her own when she noticed her starting to fidget with her bandages.

Satsuki tensed up at the gesture, suddenly feeling vulnerable. She looked up briefly, her beautiful blue eyes glistening with unshed tears as she met Nonon's. She considered, if only for a moment, telling her that which she had never spoken of to anybody else outside of confirming Ryuko's suspicions, but almost as soon as the thought hit her, she bit her lip, averting her gaze. "It is nothing to concern yourself over."

"Satsuki-chan-" Nonon uttered, intertwining their fingers, uncertain what to do and wishing more than anything she knew what it was that was causing Satsuki this much pain that she would even turn her blade on herself like this.

" *Please, Nonon* …!" Heat flushed Satsuki's face in frustration, pleading for Nonon to drop it. Nonon and Ryuko jumped a bit at the suddenly display. "Just drop it… It is something I can never speak of to *anybody* . It is simply too humiliating…"

Satsuki's mind was spiraling in a thousand different directions, overthinking the numerous possibilities that could come of telling her the truth.

Nonon knew at this point pushing her to open up about it would only upset her more. That was the last thing she wanted to do, yet a feeling of guilt weighed on her. Maybe if she had tried harder to reach out to Satsuki and actually be there for her, then it wouldn't have gotten this far. Was this a result of her negligence? If she had payed closer attention, then…

"...You didn't have these wounds the other day… Did I… by chance do something that upset you…? If I had known-"

"No, of course not…!" Satsuki immediately insisted, pulling her into a hug. She couldn't stand hearing her blame herself. "None of this is your fault, Nonon. I just... became overwhelmed by some memories of the past, and it has happened several times since then… I'm sorry… For worrying you. *Both* of you."

Nonon returned the embrace, wrapping her arms around Satsuki's neck. "Well, whatever the case. I'm sure we can work something out, together. Until you get better, I'm staying with you. I won't ever leave Satsuki-chan's side."

Satsuki was surprised at first but gave a small smile in response.

"Oh, that reminds me, there's something we should probably talk about." Ryuko chimed in. She wasn't sure if she should bring it up now, but went through with it in the end. "Mako's mom offered you to stay with us for a while so there'd be a doctor around just in case… you know... They wanted to avoid sending you to a hospital if they could help it and I doubt you'd want to go to one anyway. I guess she can come along as well if she wants. They'll practically welcome anybody."

"I understand..." Satsuki said after taking a second to process it. Most people with this sort of problem would have been institutionalized with or without consent, so the fact that she had a second option right now was more than enough reason to accept… She was in no position to complain about it. Come to think of it, Sukuyo must have also been the one who told Ryuko

and Nonon to check her arms. "I am fine with that… It is about time you returned home, anyways, right...?"

"So wait, we're gonna staying at the underachiever's house now? Great." Nonon asked, with little enthusiasm. "Well, I guess it's better than some hospital at least. So when are we going?"

"A few hours perhaps and I shall be ready. I need to prepare first." Satsuki said, getting up.

"Gotcha." Ryuko said, a bit surprised Satsuki was so cooperative about it. She then gave a downcast look. In truth, she wanted to say so much more, to tell her she could rely on her and others more, and yet, after remembering how much worry her own recent appetite had been causing everybody around her, she couldn't bring herself to say much of anything without feeling like a complete hypocrite. Seeing Nonon crying had reminded her of Mako and how worried Mako had been over her not eating well enough.

Suddenly she felt helpless. How could she possibly help Satsuki if she herself was no better off?

…

A/N: This chapter was kinda all over the place, cuz it's hard to all always know how to respond in a situation like this. But I hope somebody enjoyed it. It was really hard knowing exactly how to write the second half of this, or how Ryuko and Nonon would handle Satsuki in such a position. Having Nonon just act instead of beating around the bush just felt right to me. Ryuko can be really brash but I feel like she might stay calmer than Nonon over something like this, especially if she had idea what was making Satsuki do it. She's still just as worried but a part of her doesn't entirely feel she has a right to say much cuz of her own problems.

Chapter 10

Once again there's some spliced dialogue from my SatsuNon comic in this though I changed a few things cuz I want to incorporate Sukuyo becoming a mother figure to Satsuki in this, for her to be somebody Satsuki genuinely grows to trust. I felt it worked best.

Satsuki, Nonon and Ryuko returned to the Mankanshoku's later that evening around 6. Ryuko was immediately greeted by a bear hug, courtesy of Mako.

"Ohh, Jakuzure-senpai is here too? You should have told us she was coming over, Ryuko-chan. I'll go get the room prepared!" Mako said excitedly, running off upstairs.

Satsuki then looked at Sukuyo with a bit of guilt in her face, worried about what she might say. Barazo was standing next to her.

"Before you three go upstairs, can we talk to you?" Barazo asked. "We've already spoken with Mako about this so she knows what's going on."

Nonon reached up to hold Satsuki's hand, fully aware that she still wasn't all that comfortable about this situation. And who could blame her? The only other option she had been given was to be stuck behind four white walls in a hospital. At least here she had people around her that she was somewhat familiar with.

"After talking it over, we've decided it would probably be best if somebody stayed with you at all times, whether it be while taking baths, sleeping, etc. It doesn't matter who it is but somebody will have to keep an eye on you... Hell, even Sukuyo here can stay with you sometimes if you need her too." Barazo smiled, trying to be reasonable. As a doctor, however, he simply couldn't allow an accidental suicide under his watch from a habit like self harm, not if he could help it.

A young girl like her should be living her life out like a normal teenager her own age, not playing around with her life like this.

"I understand…" Satsuki barely acknowledged what he was saying. Even though she didn't like it, she had no choice in the matter. It would be no different from a psychological institution. And yet… taking a bath with another person present. The idea of it terrified her.

"You girls are okay with keeping an eye on her, aren't you?" Barazo asked, looking at Nonon and Ryuko.

"Of course, I'll always stay by Satsuki-chan's side no matter what." Nonon didn't even hesitate.

"Yeah. You can count on us." Ryuko grinned a bit, but didn't say anything more, still not certain if this was a good idea or not. Even if it wasn't, what other choice did they have? They couldn't just let Satsuki continue cutting herself.

"Glad to hear it. By the way, Satsuki-chan, do you mind if I take a look at your arms?" Barazo asked. "I'll rebandage them afterwards, but I need to know what the damage is I'm working with. I also have some ointment that'll help them heal faster if you're interested."

Much to his relief, Satsuki agreed to it and Sukuyo and Nonon stayed with them as he redressed her wounds while Ryuko went upstairs to talk to Mako.

"Woah, kid, you've done quite the damage here. But I'm sure we can get you fixed up real fast." Barazo noted lightheartedly after he had removed her old bandage wraps. He had grabbed some ointment and more bandage wraps as well as some butterfly bandages, feeling they would be a more desired alternative to stitches, just in case some of the wounds were worse than others.

Sure enough, the lacerations covering Satsuki's arm would no doubt cause severe scarring, but this was one of the worst cases he'd seen of self harming so far. It was a good thing it had been caught as soon as it was or cutting any deeper could have resulted in possible nerve damage or something far worse.

They could see, just by looking at the slashes on her arm, the anger and frustration that had been channeled out into each and every one of them. Who knew how long she had been suffering with the thoughts and feelings that had eventually led to it?

Nonon once again mentally kicked herself for not having really recognized the signs. If she had known Satsuki was at a risk of doing something like this, she would have tried harder to talk to her before it got that far.

It hurt so much, knowing Satsuki felt this alone that instead of coming to talk to her about it, she just took it out on herself. She was trying to carry the weight of the world on her shoulders all over again just like back in elementary school.

As Satsuki's so-called best friend, Nonon was sure this made her made her look inadequate. Despite her regrets, however, she knew that, right now, the only option she had was to keep holding Satsuki's hand, like she always had. They would get through this together.

"There we go. All done." Barazo smiled as he finished patching up her arms.

"Thank you." Satsuki murmured, feeling bad for putting them through all this trouble.

"It's no problem. I'm glad to help." Barazo responded with ease.

"Now… why don't you two girls head upstairs, okay? I should have dinner ready in a little while, so let Ryuko-chan and Mako know, alright?" Sukuyo encouraged them. "And, Satsuki-chan... Just know we're always here for you, dear... If there's something bothering you don't hesitate to come to one of us, okay?"

Even though she heard her words, Satsuki didn't respond. She almost looked detached right now.

"Thank you so much, Oba-san..." Nonon took the initiative for her, before pulling her along. "Come on, Satsuki-chan."

When they reached Mako's room, Mako had laid out two futons because the bed wasn't big enough to be shared between four people.

"Hey." Ryuko offered Satsuki a grin but she unfortunately only received a blank stare in return. Suddenly she felt a little awkward. "So um anyway, there's not enough room on the bed for all of us so we were thinking-"

"Ryuko-chan and I can sleep on the floor!" Mako interrupted.

"No, please… do not trouble yourselves for my sake. I have already caused enough problems as it is." Satsuki muttered.

"Don't say that…" Nonon scolded her lightly.

"Yeah, it's no problem at all. Mako and I used to sleep on the floor all the time, so we're totally fine with it.."

"No, I insist. I will take the futon. You three can sleep on the bed." Satsuki placed her bag next to the futon.

"Well, I'm sleeping where Satsuki-chan sleeps. So if she's sleeping on the floor, then so am I." Nonon said, stubbornly.

"Nonon…" Satsuki murmured, unable to protest in the end. The truth was a part of her liked the idea of sleeping with Nonon more often, regularly even, but such a desire felt selfish to her. She reached up and stroked her on the head. "I see. If that is really what you want to do then I won't stop you."

Nonon blushed a bit at the contact, before moving to place her bags next to Satsuki's.

It wasn't much longer before Matoro came up and called everybody down for dinner. Upon sitting down at the table, Ryuko forced herself to eat several croquettes, much to Mako and Satsuki's relief. Even though it didn't settle well on her stomach, she wanted to keep attention off of herself for right now. The guilt for worrying everybody over it starting to catch up with her. There had also been the dizzy spell yesterday, which was concerning in itself.

In the meantime, as Ryuko and Mako ate Matoro made a bad attempt at flirting with Nonon, only to be shot down instantaneously.

"Look, kid, I've already got somebody I like and that's Satsuki-sama. Besides, no offense, but you're way too young for me. Aren't you in elementary school or something?" Nonon scoffed, catching Satsuki's attention.

"Wait, you're into other girls?" Matoro rose an eyebrow. Ryuko and Mako weren't the only ones then.

"Yeah, why? You got a problem with that?" Nonon asked defensively.

"No, not really. Nee-san is into girls too, so I was just kinda surprised is all. Are you two dating then?" Matoro asked, all too curious.

Well, no. The thing is… Satsuki-sama… she doesn't feel the same way as me. I got turned down." Nonon murmured weakly.

It wasn't something she really liked talking about, but there no reason to hide it. And in front of Satsuki, she couldn't deny it even if she wanted to.

Satsuki blushed a bit at the mention, looking away as she felt several eyes on her.

"Oh. Must be rough." Matoro uttered, before looking at Satsuki. "So… does that mean *you're* into guys, or-"

Ryuko stopped him immediately, not liking where this was progressing. It wasn't that she didn't think Satsuki could handle it herself if it got too far, but it was best to stop it sooner than later. "I think you've asked them enough, Matoro. Just eat your food and leave them alone already."

"Alright, fine. *Geez*, I was just curious." Matoro muttered, bitterly.

After that, the conversation was dropped and not brought up again. However, due to the topic getting broached in the first place in front of so many people, Satsuki and Nonon were finding it hard to face each other.

Truthfully, Ryuko wished Satsuki would just be honest about her feelings, but she knew there was no easy way around the situation, so she couldn't bring herself to say anything.

After they finished their food, Satsuki approached Sukuyo awkwardly, letting the others go ahead to the room. "Would you mind if I helped you clean? It is the least I could offer to thank you for your hospitality."

"Oh, there's really no need for that, I promise, just go ahead and make yourself right at home, okay, honey?" Sukuyo spoke softly, placing a hand on Satsuki's shoulder. She wanted to let Satsuki know she had a family that was here for her. She needed to know she wasn't alone.

"I appreciate it… but even so, I… want to help you." Satsuki insisted. Sukuyo could see the desperation in her eyes. She would feel bad about herself if she *didn't* help.

"Well, if you're really sure about it, I suppose I could use a little help with washing the dishes." Sukuyo pointed out.

"I see. You can leave it to me." Satsuki smiled politely, before heading over to the sink where the dirty dishes and utensils had been placed beside. Filling the sink with clean soapy water, she placed the dishes into it, after which she grabbed a nearby rag and started scrubbing in silence all the while trying her best to avoid getting her bandaged arms wet.

It wasn't until her hand brushed across a large knife that she found herself coming to a pause. She picked it up and scanned it over, part of her mind already shutting down. Fortunately, Sukuyo gently took the knife away from her before she could do anything with it, snapping her out of her thoughts.

Sukuyo quickly washed it up and rinsed it in the sink, placing it in the dish drainer to get it away from her.

"So, Satsuki-chan… About Nonon-chan, do you… like her?" Sukuyo asked, in an attempt to distract her. "I know she said you turned her down, but I got the feeling from the way you were acting about it that there was more to it than that. I'll understand if you don't want to talk about it."

"It's… not that I don't return her feelings. I'm just... afraid is all." Satsuki said in a low voice.

"Afraid of what, dear...?" Sukuyo wanted to know.

All of sudden, the urge hit Satsuki to trust her. To tell her everything. Tears formed in the corners of her eyes. "...It's Ragyo… she… She did things to me… Things that no mother should even *think* of... I... I'm sorry..."

Her chest constricted, as the words left her mouth. Instant regret consumed her mind. She shouldn't have said anything. What was she *thinking*? Sukuyo would think she was disgusting.

"No, no, you don't need to apologize... I understand, shh, it's okay… you don't have to finish. I'm so sorry you had to go through that... No child deserves to be treated that way, especially not by their own mother. I can only imagine how scared you must have been… but you're safe now. You know that, right?"

"Yes…" Satsuki said despite the hesitation she felt about it.

"Is that… why you've been cutting yourself?" Sukuyo wanted to know.

"Yes. At least part of it… it helps… with the memories…" Satsuki looked down at her arms.

Sukuyo then said the only thing she could think to at this point without the risk of overwhelming Satsuki more than she already had.

"I know I told you this earlier, but I'm completely serious. If you ever need somebody to talk to when you feel that way, you have people here that would be willing to listen, myself included. You're not alone in this."

Satsuki felt the corners of her lips curve a bit at hearing that. Mako had basically told her the same thing.

"...It's funny. I can see where your daughter gets her personality from. She's a lot like you." Satsuki noted.

"She is? Oh, I hadn't realized. Well, I do try my best." Sukuyo said with modesty.

Satsuki couldn't help but chuckle in response.

"I think you've done a wonderful job. With Ryuko as well." Satsuki acknowledged.

"Tell me. Have you ever considered having children one day, Satsuki-chan?" Sukuyo asked out of curiosity.

"No, I mean… Nonon is the one I like, so she and I couldn't possibly…" Satsuki trailed off into silence, realizing she had slipped up on admitting her feelings for Nonon again.

Fortunately Sukuyo didn't tease her over it or anything. It wasn't like she didn't already know.

"Well, you know adoption is always an option. I can guarantee you there'd be lots of children out there that would love to have a home with two caring mothers." Sukuyo said.

A caring mother.

Satsuki pondered it, before a sense of discomfort settled in her stomach.

The opposite of what Ragyo was to me.

"I'm not so sure… that I would be suited for such a title. Because of *that woman* , I…"

Her hand twitched and she was unable to stop herself from reaching towards her bandages. Fortunately Sukuyo caught her hand and stopped her just in time.

"She stole *everything* from me..." Satsuki felt tears welling up in her eyes, allowing Sukuyo to gently pull her into a hug. Satsuki immediately melted in the embrace. This woman… more than anybody else, she was what a mother was *supposed* to be like.

"Shh. I know. I know, sweetheart. I can tell you're in a lot of pain right now, and you have every right to be. Just let it out, okay? There's no need to hold anything back." Sukuyo rubbed circles into her back in an attempt to calm her down. It was at that point that something inside of Satsuki just… snapped, the desire for something she had always wanted down deep hitting her full force, and she couldn't stop crying.

Reaching up, she hesitantly wrapped her arms around Sukuyo's waist line, returning the hug.

Her voice cracked amongst sobs, barely above a whisper: "Thank you… so much… I'm sorry for causing you all so much trouble…"

"Aww, it's okay..." Sukuyo smiled. "I really don't mind it at all. And I think Satsuki-chan would make a wonderful mother. Even if you don't see it in yourself right now, you're kind and you have a good heart too. Sure, you have some things to work through first, but it's all alright because I know you'll get there eventually. I believe in you… One day you'll look back on your scars and realize just how strong you were. You're a *survivor* , so I want you to be proud of that."

"A survivor…" Satsuki uttered. "Yes… but even so... the things I've done, they were-"

"Shh. Now, what was it I told you the other day, hm?" Sukuyo interrupted, stubbornly refusing to allow her to find a reason to hate herself. She pulled back to look Satsuki in the eyes.

"You told me… that I should listen to my elders…" Satsuki felt her face heat up in shame, feeling like she had done something wrong.

"Well of course that's important, but I meant the other thing, remember? I told you that having regrets are fine but you can't let it stop you from moving forward."

"Mn." Satsuki uttered, still uncertain if she deserved the right to move forward.

"Now look at me… This pain you're feeling right now - I promise it will pass with time. But remember... you have to work with me, Satsuki-chan, and come to one of us instead of hurting yourself. If something bad happened to you, there are so many people that would be hurt by it…"

Satsuki averted her gaze. "...I almost feel like it would be the opposite, that I've been making everything worse for those around me. Perhaps I should just check myself into a hospital, after all… Would it not be better for you and your family? Ryuko and Nonon as well, I..." Satsuki muttered, without even knowing where the words were coming from.

"No... Now none of that… We're all glad to have you staying with us." Sukuyo soothed.

"That's right… There's nobody in this world that makes me happier than Satsuki-chan… I couldn't bare to lose you."

"Nonon…!" Satsuki jumped a bit at hearing Nonon's voice. She turned with hesitation to look at the pink haired girl standing near by. She immediately averted her gaze, feeling humiliated. "How much… did you hear?"

"I heard most of it… About Ragyo-oba-sama, and me…" Nonon said cautiously, not wanting to upset her. Based on the implications of their conversation, Ragyo's relations with Satsuki had went beyond just abuse and it made sense now why Satsuki had rejected her even if she returned her feelings.

"I see." Satsuki glared at the floor.

"It's okay. I understand… why you didn't tell me you liked me back. You were afraid that I would try to do something to you like *she* did. I get it..." Nonon approached her with caution.

"Nonon…-" Satsuki flinched as the shorter girl reached up towards her face, feeling more vulnerable than ever. Even though it wasn't rational, she couldn't stop the instinctual fear created by years of sexual abuse from hitting her like a ton of bricks. What if Nonon tried something? What if she-

Small arms pulled her down into a gentle embrace.

"But I don't care about all of that other stuff. As long as I can hold Satsuki-chan's hand like I always have, and sometimes hug you when you're okay with it, that's all that matters to me… So if you're not comfortable with things like sex or even kissing yet, even if you *never* are, I'm fine with that because I'll *always* love you, and I'll *continue* to love you, with or without *any* of that."

Tears reformed in Satsuki's eyes all over again, as she reached up to return Nonon's hug. She had never wanted her or anybody else to find out about that. It scared her. And yet Nonon had accepted anyway, despite finding out the truth.

No matter what they went through together, ever since they were kids Nonon never *once* thought to leave her side.

"You don't need any dumb sand! I'll hold your hand! Forever and ever!"

Nonon had said that to her in elementary school, and, back then, the weight behind her words and promise hadn't truly sunk in, but now, since they had gotten older, the trust Nonon had earned from her was unrivaled.

Trust, however, was still a fragile thing for Satsuki; easily broken, but something inside her genuinely wanted to confide in the smaller girl, and believe that, with her, everything would be okay.

"Nonon, I…" Satsuki struggled to find her voice. "I want the same thing as you do, to hold you and call you mine... I want that so much it hurts. I am sorry for not telling you sooner… I was afraid that you would want things from me which I wouldn't be capable of offering… You deserve somebody who can satisfy you in a relationship. I don't think I can be that person. Somebody who can't *put out* … You would surely get sick of me."

"You're wrong." Nonon insisted. "I told you before, and I'll say it again, no matter how many times I have to. All I want is to be by your side, to look at the world from the same eye level as you do. I want to hold your hand so you don't have to suffer through these things alone, because you deserve to be happy… And... I'd love to be the one to help you find that happiness, but only if you want me to."

Satsuki considered her words, her heart fluttering in response to Nonon's confession. The blush on Nonon's face was brighter than ever. It was the cutest thing Satsuki had ever seen in her life, she was sure of it.

Bending down ever so slightly, she lifted Nonon's face to meet her eyes, unable to fight off the heat in her own face.

She leaned forward with hesitation until their noses were only inches apart. Their breaths collided, hearts pounding in their chests.

Feeling a lump in her throat, Satsuki swallowed in an attempt to calm her nerves. The blush on Nonon's cheeks grew brighter by the second at how close they were.

However, before their lips could meet, several images of Ragyo on top of her flashed in Satsuki's head, causing her to completely lose her resolve. She immediately curled in on herself, struggling to breathe.

"I'm sorry... I can't yet… I just..." Satsuki turned away, scraping aggressively at her arms within an instant.

Damn it.

It was both Nonon and Sukuyo who stopped her this time, holding onto her hands to distract her.

"No, don't apologize…" Nonon said. "It's okay… I told you… all of that can wait until you're ready. Come on, let's just go upstairs for now, alright?"

"Mn…" Satsuki barely acknowledged her words, but followed along as urged, leaving Sukuyo behind, despite the frustration she was feeling with herself. She had wanted to kiss Nonon, so much, for so long, but the fear… it was still too great.

She felt weak.

…

"Yo, you're back. We were starting to get a bit worried." Ryuko smirked.

"I'm fine now. You don't need to worry about me." Satsuki said simply.

"Oh, that reminds me! There's some towels prepared over there if you want to take a bath." Mako pointed out. "Mom and dad said one of us would have to come with you to the bathroom in case you tried to hurt yourself again, so I hope that won't be too much of an issue."

"It's not like I would have expected any less." Satsuki murmured. Despite her acknowledgement of Mako's words, however, the atmosphere felt thick and uncomfortable due to knowing that her secret was out in the open.

Unfortunately, if she wanted to clean herself, she knew she had no choice but to tolerate it.

"Nonon, would you… mind coming with me…?" Satsuki didn't want to consider herself shy but, right now, she felt awkward and insecure, asking for such a thing.

Yet, due to how long they had known each other, Nonon had seen her naked on far more occasions than just once or twice, they had even taken baths together quite often when they were younger, so she was no doubt the person of choice if she had to pick somebody.

"Of course not. Let me get the towels." Nonon smiled understandingly, as Satsuki grabbed some shampoo and bathing supplies from her bag, alongside a pair of pajamas.

Upon grabbing the towels, Nonon quickly followed Satsuki to the bathroom, closing the door behind them.

"I'll place your towels over here on the shelf, that way they'll be easy to reach when you're finished, alright?"

"Thank you." Satsuki acknowledged. Without even realizing it, she had been saying 'thank you' a lot lately, but it wasn't really that huge of a surprise. Anybody who had known the 'true' Satsuki knew that she was an incredibly polite girl, disciplined behavior that had been engraved in her from an early age, probably partly because of Ragyo. Whether that was always a good thing or not was hard to say.

Standing back, Nonon allowed her to undress, trying her best to avoid staring too much. It was undeniable that Satsuki had a beautiful body; she was the most beautiful person Nonon had ever known, but, right now, focusing on such things felt wrong to her.

More than a lover or anything else, Satsuki needed a *friend* , not to be treated or looked at like a mere object as Ragyo had done to her.

After getting out of her clothes, Satsuki bent down, drawing water into the bathtub. Making sure to avoid getting her bandages wet, she then stepped in, allowing herself to soak.

As she began washing herself with a rag, it wasn't long before Ragyo's hands started prodding at her body all over again.

Her arms immediately started itching, and, as if on instinct, more or less completely forgetting her surroundings, she stood up and reached out towards the nearby shelf to grab a razor blade from the medicine cabinet.

"Satsuki-chan, what are you doing? Hey… give me that." Nonon wasn't fast enough to stop her from grabbing it, but was quick enough to get involved before she could hurt herself with it. She took her hand, prying the tiny weapon from her grip and tossing it to the side.

"Nonon… Please, you don't understand… I swear I'll stop, but just once more… I need this." Satsuki pled desperately, as she once again tried to reach out towards the razor, only to be desperately held off by the smaller girl.

At hearing Satsuki's broken pleas to let her cut herself, Nonon's heart tore to pieces.

"Come here… Sit down…" she said softly, as she urged her back into the bathtub.

"No, she keeps *touching* me. She won't *stop* . I have to make her go away… Please, Nonon… You don't have to tell anybody. Just one cut. That is all I ask..." Satsuki pled again, becoming more desperate than ever, her mind completely clouded. She clearly wasn't thinking straight at all, and was saying anything she could think to to convince Nonon to let her have this. It was an obvious addiction, the irrational way she was acting right now.

She had already told herself she would stop a couple times, which naturally never ended with the successful results. Once again, she attempted to reach out towards the razor, held off by Nonon yet again.

Tears formed in the corners of Nonon's eyes, feeling her heart pounding in her chest with fear and pain. Part of her almost wanted to give in to her request, if only to stop hearing Satsuki cry, but if she got ahold of the razor there was no telling how far she would go this time, and maybe it was selfish of her, but she didn't want to see Satsuki destroy her body anymore than she already had.

"Shh. Hey, it's alright… You're safe now, Satsuki-chan… She's not here anymore, so please… just talk to me." Nonon reached out and hugged her, hoping it would calm her down.

Slowly, Satsuki stopped resisting but was no less upset. If she had truly wanted to, she could overpower Nonon easily, but for some reason she hadn't. "She keeps touching me. I can still feel her inside of me. I feel *disgusting* . I just want to make her to stop."

Her voice shook with fear.

"I know…" Nonon choked out weakly, barely catching her hands as she attempted to tear into her bandages.

"Please… Just one more time... I swear I won't ever do it again." Satsuki insisted again, much to Nonon's distress.

"I'm sorry... You know I won't let you do this... I'd do *anything* for you, except *that* ." Nonon held her tighter and closer than before, not caring in the slightest that she was becoming wet from having water splashed on her.

At hearing that, Satsuki broke down into silent sobs, resting her head against Nonon's shoulder.

Nonon's chest ached as she allowed Satsuki to cry on her. She wished she could do more, to take away the pain she was feeling, but all she could do at the moment was to continue to remind her she was safe, that Ragyo wasn't there to hurt her anymore.

Slowly, she felt herself becoming more relaxed.

"....I apologize, Nonon... I don't know what came over me…" she mumbled, feeling guilty for making such a scene. "You must think I am pathetic…"

"No, of course not… You're the strongest person I know and nothing will *ever* change that. You're in the process of recovering from a serious trauma right now and that'll take time, but it's okay because I told you I'd support you no matter what." Nonon said.

Satsuki looked down, not even caring that her entire body was exposed to her.

"...I keep thinking... Perhaps if I had been stronger, then maybe I could have stopped her. But I always froze up and let her do what she wanted. I couldn't even stop my own body from reacting when she touched me…" Satsuki grew humiliated as she talked about it, the memories all too fresh in her mind just like it just happened minutes before. Once again she tried to reach for her bandages, but Nonon's hands held firm.

"Hey, none of that was your fault. What she stole from you… I won't allow you to blame yourself for it. You weren't even given a choice, so don't say those things about yourself." Nonon said, growing disparaged when Satsuki didn't respond.

"Why don't I wash your hair? You wouldn't mind that, would you?" Nonon offered.

Satsuki once again remained silent as she thought about it.

"Satsuki-chan?" Nonon called out to get her attention.

"Yes… I am fine with that." Heat rose to Satsuki's cheeks. Part of her was scared but something told her that, for once, it was okay. She would be okay. "..I trust you."

At hearing that and seeing Satsuki's face turn red, Nonon blushed a bit herself, finding her sudden shyness adorable. She smirked.

"Alright, I'll get the shampoo. Just hold still for me." Nonon said before grabbing the shampoo Satsuki had brought in and squirting some out into her hand and mixing in a bit of water. Satsuki slowly relaxed as Nonon began lathering it into her hair. It felt good, the pink haired Pinkette's small fingers working miracles in calming her mind.

Nonon continued to massage her scalp for several more minutes, allowing Satsuki some more time before she filled a cup up with water and began rinsing the suds out of Satsuki's hair.

Satsuki closed her eyes, allowing the water to drain down her face until her hair was finally clean.

"Thank you, Nonon... For stopping me earlier…" she said, sheepishly. "You being here… and staying by my side… It means everything to me… I… I want to kiss you, but I am still afraid… I apologize… Holding back on you like this… it is selfish of me…"

"No… It's not. And quit saying sorry already..." Nonon shook her head. She held up Satsuki's hand, lightly pecking her on the fingers. Butterflies stormed in her chest when Satsuki's embarrassed face flushed even redder than before. She then looked painfully down at

Satsuki's bandages. "The things she did to you… That doesn't just go away overnight. It'll take time and I'm okay with that. I just want you to focus on yourself and what you want. I'm not going to force you into something you're not comfortable with. We'll take things at your pace. Hear me?"

Slowly, but surely, much to Nonon's relief, Satsuki nodded in response.

At least now maybe, they had some kind of start to work with and that was all Nonon could ask for.

...

For a long time that night, Ryuko couldn't sleep well at all. The flames clouded her vision, causing her to toss and turn in bed.

At some point Mako woke up and saw her crying.

"Ryuko-chan, what's wrong? Is it Senketsu again?" Mako whispered with concern.

"Yeah… I keep seeing the flames… It won't stop, damn it..." Ryuko's voice was strained, trying her best to avoid waking up Satsuki and Nonon. Mako hugged her, helping her relax a bit.

"I feel so stupid, like this shouldn't bother me as much as it does. But he was my *friend* and he burned to pieces right in front of me. I couldn't even do a single thing to stop it from happening either... He told me to find new clothes to wear, but what's the point if he's not here with me? I miss him so much, Mako…" Ryuko broke down in her arms.

"I know you do. Even so, you have me and everybody else now too, so it's okay. Even if you have your low points, we'll always be here to pick you back up no matter what." Mako said,

caressing her face to wipe her tears.

"Please, Mako... Promise me you won't leave me like Senketsu and Dad did… If I lost you too, I don't know what I'd do… I'm so scared right now. Nee-san too… what she's been doing to herself… I don't want to see anybody else I care about die."

Perhaps finding out about Satsuki's self-harm had brought back that fear full force. She didn't always talk about her feelings, and nor had she spoken much to Satsuki about it, but that didn't mean she wasn't worried. The truth was it freaked her out and she didn't really know *what* to say. What if she just made things worse and Satsuki did something reckless because of her? She had already upset her several times now, so what if some of the injuries on her arms were because of *her* ?

Satsuki was the only family member she had left. Her only sister in the world, a new found *friend even* - The thought of losing her terrified her.

"I'm not going to leave you. I promise. Now come here." Mako smiled, before quickly pulling her in for a kiss. Ryuko blushed a bit, but allowed herself to return it. After pulling away, Mako placed her forehead to Ryuko's. "I know it's super hard right now, and you're going through a lot, but I still want you to take care of yourself. I don't want to lose Ryuko-chan either, so seeing you eat earlier even *without* a push from one of us… You have no idea how happy it made me. I'm proud of you..."

"Mako…" Had it been anybody else, Ryuko might have given some kind of snarky remark feeling she was being patronized, but with Mako, it wasn't like that. She grew sheepish at the praise, looking down. "Can you… hold me?"

"Of course." Mako beamed, wrapping her arms around her and letting Ryuko nuzzle again her soft chest. "Now just try to get some sleep, alright? We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow working through all this stuff."

"Yeah… Thanks." Ryuko said, relaxing in her warmth.

A/N: so uh sorry yall i think i need to end this here. I had another ending chapter for it but i didn't like it at all and due to life issues, i don't have any current inspiration or motivation right now to go any further with it. I guess it can be up to interpretation but satsuki does eventually kiss nonon. I deleted the original last chapter because i wasn't proud of it at all.

I may create more chapters in the future but for now just count this as completed i guess

Author's Note

For those who haven't seen, I removed the 11th chapter because I honestly don't like it at all. I've wanted to continue this story so bad for so long, but nothing is sounding good to me. I rewrote a potential continuation over 7 times, but it's all wrong. Maybe I'll come back to this story one day, but for the time being please just regard chapter 10 as the end of it.

I'm so sorry to everybody who has been enjoying this story, I just don't have the inspiration required to add more to it right now. I hope y'all don't hate me for this. I started this story as a vent fic, and it's very personal to me, so I'm glad everybody has enjoyed it for what it was. Thank you all so much.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!